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A Survey of Svevo

| LOWRY NELSON, JR.

To the casual observer almost everything about Italo Svevo seems international. It is the habit to pounce first on his pen name which signifies the Italic Swabian; even his real name suggests double origin: Ettore is an intimately Italian name, while Schmitz is no less intimately Germanic. Besides, he lived all his life in Trieste, of all cities in Europe one of the most geographically subject to diverse cultural pressures: Latin, Germanic and Slavic. In Svevo's time Trieste was the main port of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, that most international of nations. It was to the west of the city that Rilke, the German poet from Prague, found in Schloss Duino his fullest access of inspiration. And it was close by at Schloss Miramar that Maximilian and Carlotta lived the prelude to imperial fantasies and death in Mexico. Svevo was in origin a Jew. The image of the wandering rootless Jew is, of course, one of the most persistent in literature. In this century that image has found enhancement in secular notions of "original" sin and in the vogue of "alienation." What then could be more international than the conjunction, blessed by the Berlitz School, of the Jewish Triestino-speaking citizen of the Austrian Empire and the Catholic Dubliner condemned to think his thoughts in English? Through James Joyce's good offices Svevo's major reputation was launched in Paris, capital of the international avant-garde. It seems all the more appropriate in that *La coscienza di Zeno* made fictional use of psychoanalysis, the new universal *religio*.

One could go on describing all the international influences on Svevo's work and emphasizing the lack of local Italian influence. But that would not, even together with the other superficial evidences, alter the fact that Svevo, for all his international connections, wrote hardly anything that

did not have to do with the provincial Italian life of Trieste. For him German culture was acquired; one might even say the same for Italian culture: his mother tongue was Triestino and his native culture was the intimate life of that city. There are almost no Austrians, Germans, Slavs or any other foreigners among his fictional characters. It can be said with equal firmness that Judaism or being a Jew plays no part in his fiction. There is no sense of strain or artificiality; the assumption is that everyone is Roman Catholic or that everyone is, in point of religion, what everyone else is. Svevo's situation is quite different from that of his fellow citizens Rilke and Kafka. Both of them were in some measure alienated from their Czech surroundings. Though they both knew the local tongue they chose to write in the language of their cultural islands, which was indeed rather the language of Berlin than of Vienna. Rilke, of course, was the more obviously international: he wrote poems in French, translated, of all people, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, not to mention Valéry, the Russian *Igor Tale*, Lermontov, Leopardi, and others. Appropriately he died on the linguistic border between French and German in Switzerland. Kafka, in another sense, was even more international: his novels and stories with their hallucinatory provincial settings seem located on some never-never Bohemian seacoast, in a purely mental and therefore universal landscape. He is an inventor of myth and not a depicter of manners and actualities. Biographically speaking, the community in which he lived, German-speaking Jews in Prague, was doubly alienated from its surroundings: both in language and in religion. Svevo, in contrast, lived the intimate life of his city, spoke its vernacular, followed unquestioningly the allegiance of the Italian majority to Italy rather than to Austria. As Joyce almost exclusively devoted himself to writing not merely about Ireland but about Dublin, so in his fiction Svevo confined his focus and interest to his native city. Though he traveled widely in Europe, especially in his later years, and though he attended a commercial school in Germany between the ages of 12 and 17, almost never does Svevo make use of foreign allusions in his fiction. In utter contrast with

Joyce he continued to live in his native city and to make it the setting of his novels and stories. We must conclude, then, that in most things Svevo was far from "international." It would be closer to the truth to call him parochial.

The matter should be stressed. Both in Italy and elsewhere the *caso Svevo*, that is, his neglect in Italy and his sudden fame abroad, has colored the view of those who know him only superficially. The persistent point of reference for Svevo has become his connection with Joyce. Many ironies can be drawn, indeed have been drawn, from the situation: the young unknown impoverished Irishman, stubborn in his conviction of literary genius, giving Berlitz lessons in English to the older "successful" Triestino businessman whose tentative literary ambitions had been practically stifled by critical indifference. It is, of course, to Joyce's glory that he encouraged the older man with his enthusiasm especially for *Senilità* (whose English title *As a Man Grows Older* was his suggestion). For Svevo it was a new lease of life and he never failed to express his near reverence for Joyce, notably in his speech to Il Convegno of Milan on March 8, 1927. It would seem that Svevo's character suggested traits of Leopold Bloom and that Livia Veneziani, Svevo's wife, is memorialized in the fluvial Anna Livia Plurabelle. But apart from continuing friendship that is about as far as mutual influence went. It is a further irony that Joyce achieved his ambition and became the darling of literate London and New York, while Svevo, despite the youthful advocacy of Eugenio Montale and Giacomo Debenedetti, encountered a continued opposition from the men of letters amongst his new-found countrymen.

A further point of reference in Svevo's "internationalism" is the influence of foreign authors on his literary practice. Apparently he read Stendhal, Flaubert, Zola, and Schopenhauer, since their influence is discernible, sometimes overpowering in his earliest novel *Una vita* (1892), whose title confesses another influence in Maupassant. But at that time if one read novels and philosophy those were the authors one would naturally read. Manzoni would have seemed extremely remote as a possible model or impetus.

Indeed, in one of his essays for *L'Indipendente* of Trieste (18 September 1884) Svevo wrote: "Centuries will pass before mere distance will succeed in diminishing for our descendants the difference that seems so great to us in, for example, the methods and purposes of Benjamin Constant, Mme. de Staël, Walter Scott, Victor Hugo, on the one hand, and Balzac, Zola, the brothers Goncourt, on the other." There is every indication that Svevo continued to read throughout his life a great variety of books, but it is difficult to ascertain precisely the trajectory of his later *Belesenheit*. After his early formation, heavily influenced, to no one's surprise, by the realistic and naturalistic novel, he went his own artistic way, always aware, though in no systematic way, of the revelations of the contemporary *Zeitgeist*. His literary career runs parallel with those of Proust and Kafka; it never intersects.

One of the most important emanations of the *Zeitgeist* in Svevo's time was Sigmund Freud. It is especially in regard to *La coscienza di Zeno* that Svevo's name is linked to his. After all, the novel is based on a version of psychoanalytic insight: any novice can see how Zeno Cosini is haunted by the ghost of his father and impassioned erratically by images of his mother. Still, the novel had already been enriched psychologically by the example of Balzac and Dostoevsky, not to mention Constant, Stendhal and Tolstoy. In other words, all psychological probing cannot be directly attributed to the most overtly systematic of its exponents. Freud's bourgeois and conventional tastes, as one finds them in Ernest Jones's biography, would hardly have allowed him the freedom of objective characterization and self-revelation that we find in the novels of Svevo. Freud, after all suppressed, even in the public sense, the results of his own crucial self-analysis. This barely diminishes Freud's achievement and yet it reveals his limitations: in an atheistic system somebody has to play God. Svevo, in his perhaps naïve version, chooses to present an ironic involvement of the psychoanalyst and a prognosis coterminous with the living out of life. We fulfill the destinies that live with us, whether we are sufferer or ministrant. But, as Henry James

remarked, it is good for a novelist to know something, but not too much, of what he writes about. Svevo knew just enough about psychoanalysis to fictionalize it to his own purpose. On several occasions he himself said that he had really had nothing to do with psychoanalysis. "It is now said that I wrote *Senilità* and *La coscienza di Zeno* under its influence. As for *Senilità* it is easy for me to respond. I published *Senilità* in 1898 and at that time Freud did not exist, or in so far as he existed his name was Charcot. As for *La coscienza di Zeno*, I thought for a long time that I owed it to Freud, but it seems I was mistaken. Just a minute: there are two or three ideas in the novel that are indeed taken bodily from Freud." One he is quite proud of and the other he would not boast of if it were not linked with a little idea of his own. The only practicing psychoanalyst in Trieste at the time, a certain Dr. Weiss, was perturbed that he might have been taken as the model for Svevo's Dr. S. But Svevo reassured him and Dr. Weiss undertook to study *La coscienza di Zeno* and review it for a Viennese psychoanalytic journal. After he had read it, however, he informed Svevo that he could not review the novel "because it had nothing to do with psychoanalysis." Svevo overcame his disappointment and reflected that "we novelists are given to toying with the great philosophies . . . We falsify them but we humanize them." The upshot, then, is that if *La coscienza di Zeno* is a psychoanalytic novel, it is of the strictly Svevian persuasion and we must add Trieste as an heretical provincial "see." Its apostolic succession could as well be drawn from Skotoprigonevsk.

We must conclude that Svevo was essentially a provincial writer who cultivated again and again his own native plot. His interest lay directly in what he knew and experienced, rather than in what he could convincingly imagine beyond his sphere. But that "provincialism" was achieved only after several scattered and imitative starts. The feuilleton pieces that appeared in *L'Indipendente* of Trieste between 1880 and 1890 range widely over letters: Shakespeare, Heine, Max Nordau, Turgenev, Zola, Wagner, Scarfoglio, Taine, Daudet, and such general subjects as the role of the

critic and the nature of drama. They are composed in a conversational, familiar style, entirely free from affections of rhetoric or Tuscanism; and suffusing them is the Svevian tone of humorous irony, neither allusive nor coy. His first published story "L'assassinio di via Belpoggio" (1890) was the usual later nineteenth-century exercise in the psychology of murder. One could almost describe it as Dostoevsky rendered in terms of Maupassant. But the contours of his early talent can be studied significantly only in his long and full novel *Una vita* (1892) in which traces of influence are expected and obvious. Whatever its merits and demerits, it is convincingly a novel of and about Trieste.

With all its good qualities *Una vita* remains a cento of fictional motifs borrowed from nineteenth-century masters of the novel. It echoes Goethe, Balzac, Stendhal and Zola, to mention only the most obvious. Since it is not translated and quite possibly never will be, it would seem particularly justifiable to give some critical account of it in English.

Its most obvious structural detail, at one with the *urge* of the book, is its beginning and ending with documents, with, in fact, two letters. The first, written by the protagonist Alfonso Nitti to his mother in the provinces, expresses his disquietude and despair. The second, an official communication from his employers to a friend of his, announces, with all the impersonal conventions of commercial correspondence, the suicide of Alfonso Nitti for reasons unknown. In between the reader is called upon to watch the development undergone by a young employe of a commercial establishment who has come to Trieste from his native village to make good or to "find himself." In his characterization we find mingled motifs of the superfluous man, the Werther of those days, the artist *manqué*, in a word the victim of Society and Life. But the focus of the novel is insecure: the attention given to elaborating the atmosphere of the commercial firm, the Casa Maller, leads the reader to expect a hero strangled by dull material surroundings; it is more important, according to the emphasis of the novel, for the reader to believe that Alfonso Nitti was simply, in the balance allotted him of talent, longings and emotions, not cut out

for this life. No proper artistic capital is made of the epistolary or "documentary" atmosphere which at least formally envelops the novel; more deeply, the relation between the commercial world and the good life remains undramatized.

Yet the Casa Maller is interestingly and convincingly evoked. At the beginning of the novel we are introduced to one of the main characters, Miceni, who despite his importance remains pale and lacks independence or "roundness."

At the precise hour of six o'clock Luigi Miceni put down his pen and got into his short overcoat. He saw that on the table something was out of place. He straightened the edges of a pile of papers so that they came exactly flush with the edges of the table. He gave them a second glance and found that everything was now in perfect order. In every pigeon-hole the papers were arranged in such orderly fashion they looked like bound volumes; the pens next to the inkpot were all exactly parallel.

In this passage we may note the familiar nineteenth-century mode of characterization: the prolongation of caricature. It succeeds, however, in vividly evoking atmosphere which may then accrue to the totality of the novel. In leisurely fashion the reader is introduced to the three milieux in which the action takes place. First of all, the Casa Maller is described in a way interesting, perhaps, for its value as social documentation. Though Gogol, Balzac and Dickens had preceded and excelled him, it is absorbing to watch Svevo, with his Triestino imagination, construct a whole local world of inhuman mechanicalness (copying and keeping records), of strict observance of rank, of nightmarish insecurity. Next, we are introduced to the Lanucci family with whom Alfonso Nitti lives. The father, a failure, has retired to hypochondria, and the mother has come to devote all her energies to making a match for their pallid daughter Lucia. Gustavo the son is the familiar directionless wastrel. Finally, Alfonso achieves the third milieu: he is invited to the Maller house and meets the daughter of his employer, Annetta. Now the plot can begin to gather momentum and complexity.

At the office Alfonso begins to be promoted and his

friends demoted. At the Lanuccis he is clearly being pushed into the arms of the anemic Lucia. Meanwhile his relations with the capricious Annetta became more intimate. An odd current begins to run through the action, a current of great importance, in one manifestation or another, for Svevo's later work: there is an ironic or a pathetic urge on the part of several characters to associate themselves somehow with the life of letters. Alfonso's ambition is to translate some work of German philosophy (it remained to be chosen) which, along with his own treatise (it was unwritten) on "the moral idea in the modern world," will renovate Italian philosophy and perhaps set the world to rights. Annetta, in her self-conscious manner (she almost seems aware of being unsuccessfully modeled on Stendhal's Mathilde), appropriates Alfonso for the purpose of collaborating on a cooperative novel. He sees how her mind disappointingly runs to stock romantic situations; still, out of prudence he follows her lead. She outlines the plot: "A young impoverished nobleman comes to the city to seek his fortune . . . He is at first persecuted by his employer and his fellow employees. Then he is taken into their affections because he manages to save the firm from a heavy loss . . . He marries the employer's daughter." In both Alfonso and Annetta their various ironic misunderstanding of literature is a reflection of their mistaking of life: they are in both cases marginal settlers. Somehow in both of them there is an imbalance between improvisation and practice, a maladjustment of levels of awareness. Gradually they come to play at being in love. Their second-hand understanding of what love is like makes them conform to a convention of being in love. Meanwhile, at the Lanuccis, Gustavo the wastrel son has produced a candidate for his sister's hand, a stolid avaricious typesetter. That evening Mrs. Lanucci happily tells Alfonso "that she was glad of what had happened because she had always loved literature and she thought that printing was closely related." She too manages an ironic confusion of fiction and reality.

With an effort to force the issue into the world of reality as he conceives it, Alfonso, beset by doubts as to Annetta's affections or expectations, finally drives himself to possess

her. He succeeds, but at once is forced by his mother's illness to return to the provinces. After her death, which is well related in rather leisurely fashion, he himself falls ill, as if going through a physical crisis parallel to his mental uneasiness. For a while he manages to put in perspective his relations with Annetta. "In his later years, in that old age he longed for, he would be able to tell of having *lived* in the sense in which others used the word." But the brutality of the world breaks in on him; the consequences of his own unspontaneous actions and the inadequacy of his responses are resolved in suicide.

Certain of the lesser characters are well drawn: Maller himself, Francesca, the acquaintance of Alfonso's mother and, as it turns out, Maller's mistress, and Mrs. Lanucci. In fact, one has almost the impression that the novel had the potential richness to make it great. The main fault lies in the characterization of Alfonso. It should be stressed, however, that Svevo attempted something very difficult: to present a character whom nature had endowed with a certain intelligence, a degree of awareness, a normal appearance, and yet had rendered incapable of intellectual expression, of love or of exaltation. He is surrounded with people who are self-assertive, purposeful, egocentric, calculating; for them the "life force" is instinctive. Even though he recognizes his unfitness for life, Alfonso makes no really characterizing adjustment to his situation. He is kin to the superfluous man of Russian fiction; but he has as "props" neither an Ibsenian "life-lie" nor a Goncharovian dressing gown. In Alfonso's case society is not necessarily to blame. The force of the Dickensian or the naturalistic novel seems to depend on some feeling of inherent injustice in the social order or in the very nature of life; society or God, or even the non-existence of God, is "to blame." The helpless individual is the pitiable pawn who may triumph in spite of all or who may be crushed. In Dostoevsky, of course, even in degradation and self-abasement the individual may find the means of regeneration. Later in the nineteenth-century novel what became important was the close psychological representation of origin and development not directly in terms of any world

view but rather in terms of a logic of gradual self-determination. Svevo finds himself in *Una vita* between two modes of fiction. The earlier would have made Alfonso the victim of society or of the universal meaninglessness of life. The later would have neglected any idea of higher purpose or universal lot and concentrated purely upon psychological truth. In *Una vita* Svevo seems betwixt and between: society and whatever is responsible for it are enemies and yet they do not seem the cause of Alfonso's *mal de vie*; on the other hand the psychological delineation of Alfonso does not seem adequately to lead to his half-hearted renunciation of life. Alfonso is, so to speak, an incipient modern hero, cousin to heroes of Gide and Faulkner, living in a world created by Balzac and Zola and within a convention created in Goethe's *Werther*.

The theme, not so much of the artist *manqué* as of the merely theoretical aspirant to the glories of artistic glamor, is clearly important to *Una vita*. It continues to appear centrally in Svevo's later fiction. Another theme, adumbrated in *Una vita* — the conscious attempt to make a thorough and rational effort to reverse the drift of life — is pervasive in Svevo's second novel *Senilità* (1898). The two themes seem in some way closely related. The basic impulse they both share is the confusion of life and fiction. Emilio Brentani, the protagonist of *Senilità*, age thirty-five at the time of the action, had written a novel some years before; it had received notice in the local press and he had been called a great hope for the future. Now he was considered respectable in the modest literary circle of Trieste: hope was deferred to an even less definite future. But much more important than any overt perpetration of literature is his unconscious attempt to render life literary, to mould its reality according his imagination. The beginning of the novel is a triumph of immediate revelation. It rejects utterly the usual meteorological or genealogical openings dear to nineteenth-century novelists. It also rejects that other and more original opening of the time: the plunge into the middle of things, but of marginal things, preparatory to the entrance of the main characters (as in *War and Peace*, for instance).

Since it is a third-person novel it cannot take advantage of the most immediate and "committal" of beginnings. Instead it injects the reader into the prevailing dilemmas of the main characters.

At once, with his very first words, he wanted to make it perfectly clear that he had no intention of beginning anything in the nature of a serious flirtation. For this reason he addressed her more or less as follows: "I love you very much and it is for your sake that I feel we ought to agree to behave with great prudence." His words sounded indeed so very cautious that it was hard to believe the sentiment which inspired them was altogether disinterested; had he been able to speak a little more frankly he would probably have said something of this sort: "I am very much in love with you, but it is impossible that I should ever consider you as more than a plaything. I have other duties in life, my career and my family."

A whole psychological situation, rich in possibilities, is sketched. Succinctly we are told what happened, what really lay in Emilio's thoughts, and what actually lies in wait behind them. With no effort at elaborate irony Svevo sets the tone of his particular ironic humor. Angiolina, the girl addressed, is really incapable of understanding Emilio's words; she can only feel flattered that he intends to protect her from danger: "the affection he offered her took on the aspect of something tender and brotherly." Emilio's impulse to love is willed, and he wants to keep things within a rational and reasonable compass. Of course, the novel is a chronicle of the uncontrollable and irrational consequences.

Emilio, then, has struck up an acquaintance with Angiolina in order to have a brief and uncomplicated affair such as he had often heard described by others. A measure of his growing seriousness is his confiding in those closest to him: the sculptor Balli, whom he admires to the point of imitation, and his sister Amalia, a poor plain creature who is in fact what he referred to as his "family." Amalia senses the entrance of love in the house: as he gives his account she serves him quickly and silently so that he will not have to pause to ask for anything. With the same absorption she had read the five hundred novels in their old bookcase, but her fascination now takes on a different char-

acter. The spectre of love has appeared, for her too as it turns out, to make life cruelly real and to exact tribute and vengeance.

At his second meeting with Angiolina, Emilio's imposition of a premeditated course on life continues its ironic elaboration.

Poor child! She was honest and disinterested. Would it not have been better to teach her to be less honest and a trifle more calculating? He had no sooner asked himself this question than he conceived the splendid idea of educating the girl himself. In return for the love he hoped to receive from her he could only give her one thing, a knowledge of life and the art of making the most of it . . . He stopped kissing and flattering her, and as a preparation for her initiation into vice he assumed the severe aspect of a professor of virtue.

The crux of the irony is that she already knows "life" in his outsider's sense, while she is totally incapable of understanding his complex motives of diffidence and self-conscious boldness. A further irony reveals itself: he, the theoretician and self-therapist is actually in love, while she is limited to interest in her own welfare, in being sexually satisfied and well-off. As he elaborates his courtship, with a certain caution and length, she plays her part, improvised because of the circumstances, as a virtuous girl of the lower classes. Each is quite sincere in a mixture of motives: he wishes to love and actually feels love; whereas for her the need for love is so habitual and direct that she is incapable of following his teleological fantasies or conforming to any chivalric ideal. In the eyes of a moralist the situation could be seen as mutual retribution of vice; but the reader is allowed to view it only restrictedly: through Amalia, who is hopelessly in love with Balli and can only contemplate a fruition of bliss in the permanence of married life; through Balli who would view, in conventional fashion, marriage as the most desirable balance between sex and profit; and, pervasively, through the ironic but aloof narrator.

Balli, when he comes to visit his friend, must naturally have to do with the sister. Their relationship develops in Amalia's fantasy, not so much as a self-deception as a necessity. On his first visit narrated in the novel, she comes to

open the door. "That girl inspired in Balli a hardly pleasant feeling of pity. He felt it was permissible to live only to enjoy fame, beauty or power, or at the very least wealth; but not otherwise, since one became a hateful burden on other people's lives. Why then was that poor girl alive? She was a manifest error on the part of mother nature." Svevo hereby achieves an artistic symmetry: two "couples" in mistaken and misunderstood relationships, with every possibility for tragedy. The two relatively free agents are Balli and Angiolina. Emilo and Amalia, by their very need for defences and anodynes, are marked for suffering.

Eventually, after a rich elaboration of "interpersonal" relations, both achieve their destinies. Emilio had always shown a delicate and only partially aware tact in regard to his sister's passion. She on the other hand was possessed of immediate perception as to his. Her death as a consequence of continual intoxication with ether is one of the most affecting in literature. His break with Angiolina, in its inconclusive and bitter prolongation, is, at least at the time, even more of a self-laceration. Amalia, quite unaware in her last delirium that Balli is present at her bedside, imagines that they will be married; she flutters futilely between joy and jealousy, yet even her delirious jealousy and chiding are founded on a conviction of what may now be rightfully hers, while in actual life she could not even have begun to hope. As a kind of healing relief, the novel at the very end puts the past in perspective. Emilio has come to idealize Angiolina, actually to confuse her image with that of his sister. "That symbol," to quote the final lines that Joyce got by heart, "lofty, magnificent, would on occasion come alive and take on the form of the loving, though always sad and thoughtful, woman. Yes, Angiolina is thinking and weeping! She thinks as though the secret of the universe and of her own existence had been vouchsafed her; she weeps as though in the whole wide world she had never again found so much as a casual welcome."

From beginning to end in *Senilità* there is almost no respite from intense and momentous personal relationships. Settings and secondary characters are evoked sharply but

with extreme economy. Yet there is little of the case history about the narrative; in that respect it is quite different from psychological novels such as *Madame Bovary* and *Germinie Lacerteux*. Nor is the immense irony that envelops the novel a self-complacent commentary of the omniscient narrator after the manner of Stendhal; nor is it in any way a pessimistic prepossession as in Hardy. No particular compassion is discernible in the narrator, either manfully restrained or openly expressed. He assumes a community of feeling between himself and the reader: the world and life are such as they are; the full complexity is not only revealed to any and all who observe but also surrounds and embraces them too. It is a kind of irony, then, that is not impersonal or superior or conceptual, but rather communal, universal and instructive. No one is judged and no one is blamed. In running off with an absconding cashier, Angiolina continues the elaboration of her vital and simple nature. Amalia in delirium and death finds a kind of triumph and fulfillment. Balli is clearly not ripe for crisis. Emilio, with the passage of time and with the cast of mind of a literary dabbler, manages to reshape the past in memory and attribute form to disorder. So, somehow or other, things become resolved, again ironically, in the very process of life. Much of life, as we or the novelists usually conceive it, is left out of account. Nature or external objects hardly exist except through continuous relation to the characters. There is almost no objective presentation of the state of the world. We may miss the moments of *détente*, of relief from tangled relationships, the refreshing plunge into nature or into a new life. Yet in real life we always continue to lug around our old selves with scars and illusions and in real life we know that the observer and the situation observed quickly interact till "objectivity" may all but evaporate.

One of the most persistent motifs in Svevo's fiction, which now we find strongly emerging at the end of *Senilità*, is the extraordinary power of the human mind to rationalize. To isolate and then juxtapose two events or objects is by that very fact to create a relationship, a vaguely causal or chronological relationship, between them. That which has

happened may strike the mind as somehow inevitable and therefore significant and explicable. It is a process deeper and less conscious than self-justification. One might, in fact, consider that, to speak in terms of faculty psychology, the imagination is only a partial manifestation of the universal instinct to rationalize experience. Not without reason, then, are Svevo's heroes also, in their inadequate way, men of letters. In *Senilità* the process is closely related to that other Svevian motif so firmly asserted at the beginning of the novel: the wilful attempt to take one's destiny in hand and rationally set it on a different course. It is related also, though less directly, to the motif of old age as a goal, an almost desirable refuge, a final revelation of serenity. But life is a continual sickness, real or imaginary, whose sovereign remedy is death. It is, nevertheless, only sickness that provides a full awareness of the joys, the bovine joys, of health; or more important, it is only in sickness that some ideal of the good life is formed. We are complacent or wasteful in health. If we turn to introspection we are ill again. So the circle closes. From another approach one might say that the final form of life can perforce only be revealed at death and then it is too late to appraise the result. It is only when the curtain goes down on a play that we can set all the previous action in true perspective. But we know that in our own real lives we will have to forego the knowledgeable after-theater commentary. In all of this there is something more profound than the essential sterility of pervasive pessimism as we find it in Leopardi and Schopenhauer, and the neat dualistic mythology of Freud's *eros* and *thanatos*.

Such seems to be the drift that led to *La coscienza di Zeno* (1923), Svevo's third and last novel.

One notes in Svevo's novels a progression in form from the rather shapeless elaboration within closed parentheses of *Una vita*, to the severe economy and the provisional, poised wholeness of *Senilità*, to the significant randomness and outward formlessness of *La coscienza di Zeno*. A great advantage of this last approach is that it seems to reflect life, if not art, more accurately than the others. At once it con-

fronts us with one of the most fascinating and difficult problems of modern fiction. If life is most of the time essentially drab, trivial, formless, uninteresting, how can an accurate rendition of it in art avoid incurring those same qualities? How can boredom, for example, be accurately rendered without boring the reader? The naturalistic novel commonly represented drabness and squalor in such a way as to arouse violent emotions in the reader: something must be done, this can't be allowed to happen, reform! A writer such as Verga deals with the lowly, the commonplace, but he delineates violent passions or clothes the drab in rich tones of cosmic irony which transform the commonplace into tragedy or at least suffering that implicates fate, God, the universe and society. Svevo, on the other hand, takes different risks in *La coscienza di Zeno*. He leaves the commonplace commonplace and the drab drab; that is, he leaves them eventually unevaluated. Not only that, he at once traps the reader inside the very ordinary mind of Zeno; indeed, from the start he turns the reader over to Zeno, has him tell his life through an equivocal perspective of amateur psychoanalysis, and finally allows him to impose his own baffling view of himself upon the reader. But the reader is called upon to perform his own role: from the first, if he is honest, he finds much of himself intimately revealed and concealed by Zeno's "confessions," he recognizes the ambiguity of the criteria of importance and triviality in his own life, the discrepancy between his idea of himself and the reality, and the uneasy struggle between egocentricity and altruism. The danger is that this very resemblance may alienate the reader, as people with the same defect generally avoid each other. But the air of intimate confession, the seemingly random development, and perhaps an incipient feeling of superiority entice the reader into Zeno's world of fictional reality. Actually the form is one with the content: life and experience are random and unrepeatable and particular; the end of any confession sets in motion a kind of retroactive unity.

It is an intriguing though minor question to decide what relevance a title has to a work of literature. There is, for example, no overt metaphor in George Herbert's lyrics "The

Pulley" and "The Collar" unless we include the titles. Certainly the title *La coscienza di Zeno* casts the work in a rich and interesting perspective. *Coscienza* can mean both "conscience" and "consciousness" or "awareness"; that is, it can have either ethical or experiential significance, or both. By implication the word also suggests the Freudian term *subcoscienza*, the Italian version of *Unterbewusstsein*. Whereas the English title *Confessions of Zeno* harks back to the wilful revelations of Augustine and Rousseau, the Italian *La coscienza di Zeno* contains within itself several ironies: to begin with, the work may be a dutiful unburdening of conscience or it may be a random and unevaluated account of consciousness. In Augustine God and in Rousseau mankind were the witnesses of veracity. With St. Teresa and Margery Kempe their confessors were at least witnesses of witness to God. Zeno's direct witness was his analyst who presumably was to extract the real truth from his patient's versions of it; but the ultimate witness was to be Zeno himself once he had, through his prophet, understood his own revelation. The ironic upshot, however, is clear at the very beginning. The petulant note set by "Dr. S." as an introduction reveals the genesis of the "memoirs." They were a means of therapy. But now that the patient has absconded, writes Dr. S., "I take my revenge by publishing them, and I hope he will be duly annoyed. I am quite ready, however, to share the financial spoils with him on condition that he resumes his treatment. He seemed to feel intense curiosity about himself. But he little knows what surprises lie in wait for him, if someone were to set about analyzing the mass of truths and falsehoods which he has collected here." The consciences and consciousnesses of patient and therapist are at once inextricably mixed. Now it is up to the reader to be witness to the truth; if any godlike conclusions are to be reached they must be the reader's. Thus, the reader's *coscienza* is also implicit in the title. We have to do with a universal ironist such as Shakespeare (no other comparison intended) or Gogol or Chekhov and not with tendentious ironists such as Bernard Shaw and Thomas Mann.

Since the narrative was, according to the fiction, sent

to Dr. S. in instalments, we may surmise that the seven parts of *La coscienza di Zeno* represent seven instalments. The "Preambulo" is just a preliminary discourse on the difficulties of free association. But the second instalment, "Il fumo" ("The Last Cigarette"), leads us directly into the heart of the matter. In amusing imitation of the techniques of psychoanalysis, Zeno begins by exposing and castigating his vice of smoking. His concentration narrows to the cigarette and he struggles to attribute all his ills to one "cause." At every juncture he hopes in vain to solemnize a crisis by swearing off smoking, in an attempt to inject meaning and permanent reform into his life. The amateur psychoanalyst will conclude that Zeno's early passion for smoking was an imitation of his father, as an assertion of his own masculinity; thereby he could impress his mother and in her affections usurp his father's place. But the amateur psychoanalyst finds himself in strange competition with Zeno and Dr. S.

There is a leap in time; the vice persists. Zeno leaves the sanatorium where he had gone for a cure. "As I fell asleep I thought what a good thing it was that I had left the sanatorium, for now I could cure myself slowly at my leisure. My son, sleeping peacefully next door, was certainly not likely to begin either criticizing me or imitating me for a very long time. There was absolutely no hurry." We next leap back in time to the episode "*La morte di mio padre*" ("The Death of My Father") and find ourselves confronted by the diary entry: "15.iv.1890—4.30 a.m. My father died. L.C. [Last Cigarette]." Without sentimentality of any kind, in fact with a marvelously unconscious ironic humor, Zeno gives us an account of his father's death. Any deathbed scene can, from the right angle, be in the most literal sense excruciatingly funny. Maria, the servant, tries to calm Zeno's anguish. "'Poor dear,' she said. 'To think of his dying like that, with all his fine thick hair too.' She stroked it as she spoke. It was true; my father's head was covered by a great mane of curly white hair, whereas mine, at thirty, was already very thin." Zeno is caught between hopes and fears: that his father will die and that his father will live to blame him for what happened.

The preliminaries of his father's death are grotesquely comic. At one point Zeno is reassured of a recovery by his father's flitting between bed and window in search of breath. "This was not the kind of recovery I had feared. When you are actually dying you have other things to do than to think about death." In his father's death throes, Zeno holds him down in restraint, but the delirious old man is powerfully resentful. "With a supreme effort he struggled to his feet, raised his arm high above his head, and brought it down with the whole weight of his falling body on my cheek. Then he slipped from the bed on to the floor and lay there—dead!" In the context the whole episode is lacerating and funny at the same time; but pathos and compassion are not excluded, they remain as a latent future perspective.

Likewise, the circumstances of Zeno's marriage, as related in "*La storia del mio matrimonio*" ("The Story of My Marriage"), are both comic and serious. Traces of father-fixation are amusingly obvious (except perhaps to the pseudo-Freudian, like Dr. S., who is intent on building his case and becomes thereby the butt of the novel). Zeno is first enthralled by his future father-in-law: "I deserted a girl who at one moment I thought would have suited me, and attached myself wholly to my future father-in-law." Of course he is in search of a father-figure and, once having found it, forgiveness and reassurance. But such an insight need not pass, as it has often passed in Joyce criticism, for profundity. Part of the wit is its superficial obviousness and its ultimate unknowableness. What follows upon Zeno's entrance into the Malfenti family is social comedy viewed from multiple points of view: the mother of four daughters is obviously looking for a match; Zeno's situation becomes such that, under social, familial and inner pressure, he must take some decisive step; the three marriageable sisters are quite aware of the necessity of manipulating the matter as far as possible according to their own desires and sense of propriety. When Zeno makes his declaration of love it is not to Ada, whom he supposes he loves, but rather to Augusta, as if by prearrangement among the girls. Ada has already been allotted to Guido Speier. Actually, in his un-

wittingly absurd fashion, Zeno has managed in one evening to propose to each of the three, and has ricocheted off two of them to land in the predestined arms of Augusta.

In "La moglie e l'amante" ("Wife and Mistress") we are introduced to Carla Gerco who becomes Zeno's mistress. Clearly the competent Augusta has become, in the psycho-analytic mythology of the novel, enough of a mother-figure to spur Zeno to play truant. Here, as in *Senilità*, the hero undertakes the relationship at the beginning as a means of protecting a poor defenseless creature. In the course of his concubinage Zeno smokes many "last cigarettes;" now, however, the current formula has become "last betrayal." He makes his life a tangle of jealousies and rationalizations and bizarre and embarrassing revelations. But Carla, out of sympathy for Zeno's wife (whom she has never seen, though Zeno once pointed Ada out to her as his wife), wishes to break off relations and get married. Yet Zeno surmises that "probably Carla would not feel any more bound than myself by the delicious resolutions we had taken in common the day before, and I for my part felt completely free. They had been too pleasant to be binding." The whole affair ends in a fascinating mixture of motives, open outward like life itself.

The subsequent episode plunges us into family finance and business life in Trieste, which the maladroit purchase of sixty tons of copper sulphate becomes an absurd vehicle of complications. The "business partnership" ("Storia di un'associazione commerciale") between Zeno and Guido Speier, now Ada's husband, yields its profound absurdities: the office boy is the only one who really knows anything about business affairs. Zeno's reflection that "life is neither good nor bad; it is original," risks either profundity or fatuity. But in real life it is not much use. Guido commits suicide on account of his secret and disastrous speculations and becomes thereby a kind of family martyr. Zeno is the absurd culprit who, then, to complicate matters, is forgiven. At the funeral Zeno is absent, because, again absurdly, he has followed the wrong cortège: at the crucial point he inquires of the attendant, "Has Mr. Guido Speier's funeral

procession arrived yet?" Still, at Ada's hands everything is explained and sanctified: "I forgive you for not having come to his funeral. You were unable to do so, and I forgive you. He would have forgiven you too if he were alive. What good would you have done beside his grave? You, who never loved him! Kind as you are, you might have shed tears for me, you might have wept to see my tears, but you would have shed none for him. You hated him! Poor Zeno! My poor brother!" Zeno, defenseless, is stuck and preserved like a bug in amber.

In the final episode "Psycho-analysis" Zeno rejects the method and asserts his independence. He complains that the diagnosis, an Oedipus complex, is, even though he is flattered by being mythologized, completely beside the point: "The surest proof that I never had the disease is that I have not been cured of it." The doctor was all wrong in muddying the waters of memory. "I have but to close my eyes and immediately there rises up before me my love for my mother, and the great respect and affection I felt for my father." True, the domestic irony almost reaches the farce of the Jewish joke whose punch-line is "Oedipus schm-Oedipus, just so he loves his momma." But the ironies that tumble in on each other in this final episode are too climactic, far-reaching and subtly ambiguous to permit any facile labeling. Zeno even confesses things he has heretofore concealed from Dr. S., thus marvelously obscuring what had been officially "received." The final irony is that most impersonal impediment that seals up and transmogrifies all the rest: the intervention, so external and heedless, of war.

Just as the form of the novel itself, so the nature of its fictional truth remains open. It is not really a question of honesty or dishonesty, frankness or concealment; in such an atmosphere of depth the conventional "laws" are inoperative or inapplicable. As I have said, the novel exhibits that master faculty of the mind, rationalization, which comprehends the imagination. We of course realize that part of the fiction is that Zeno has written the book, that he is a writer, an artist, that we have, in the familiar phrase, a "portrait of the artist as an old man." The complex confusion of

truth and fiction, all within the matrix of fiction, relates Svevo to Pirandello as closely as to any of his contemporaries. But in Svevo's novel we are not permanently "confused." We can finally take a general and total view of the action. Toward the end we come to realize, with astonishment, that Zeno has not really acted too foolishly or too harmfully; that he has been put upon by the world; that he has even risen on occasion to certain heights; that actually he has not had a bad life; that we cannot take his final apocalyptic pessimism quite seriously, just as we really cannot take our own. If we find at the end that we really don't like him (in the sense of imagining him real and in our presence), we are forced to ask how well we really like ourselves. The form is open enough to implicate the reader.

In some ways *La coscienza di Zeno* is an exasperating novel. As often with Dostoevsky the reader may feel he has been shut up too long in a single mind. But the open form, potentially too open, drew Svevo on to project another novel with the same characters, a continuation pure and simple of *La coscienza di Zeno*. A number of large fragments (a total of about 125 printed pages) were left at his sudden death in 1928; they have since been published as "Il vecchione," "Le confessioni del vegliardo," "Umbertino," "Un contratto," not to mention several others which eventually could have been worked into the narrative. Naturally one cannot judge from fragments. It is fair to state, however, that they give an impression of rambling formlessness, of loosely strung anecdotes and attitudes, of an aftermath rather than the beginning of a novel. Some of them almost achieve the form of short stories. Yet they lack the intensity of episodes in *La coscienza di Zeno*. Clearly Svevo had not found or had not committed to paper a means of unity or an adequate tension to restrain the dispersal of jottings and impressions. The character of Zeno, now grown older with his author, becomes a bit dessicated and dull. Certainly he continues to weave and unweave illusions in his old manner. But it is only in "Un contratto" that we glimpse again the old rich tangle of motives and rationalizations. What we

might have hoped for was not a continuation of *La coscienza di Zeno*, but rather an intensive cultivation of a form in which Svevo showed some of his least questionable success: the short story.

His reputation as a short story writer must rest chiefly on "La novella del buon vecchio e della bella fanciulla" and "Il mio ozio" (the latter translated as "This Indolence of Mine"). They have the advantages of being complete and excellent. On a slightly lower level of achievement we may place "Una burla riuscita" and "Proditoriamente." Among other fragments of fiction one should mention "Corto viaggio sentimentale," which begins splendidly as an account of the separation of a certain Signor Aghios from his wife as he is about to embark on a trivial journey; but it leads on, without concluding, to an absurd theft which would need at least all the superstructure of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* to justify it. Two other fragments sketch the ambience of an island in the Venetian lagoon (a departure for Svevo), but they ("Cimutti" and "In Serenella") are not long enough to come near to making any point. Their seeming concentration on plebeian milieux is interesting but inconclusive as they stand. Other fragments, such as "Marianno" and "Giacomo," suggest that Svevo could have managed a "proletarian" novel, but it remains a question whether he could have done much with it. Of his odd sketches perhaps the most interesting is "Argo e il suo padrone" ("Argo and his Master") which is told from the point of view of the dog Argo. Its best comparison would be some of Chekhov's early animal stories, especially "White Brow" ("Belolobyj"). Argo, with his doggish preconceptions, is not without suggestion of Zeno's empirical and monomaniacal approach to the world. It is quite a loss that Svevo did not give better shape or further echo to the narrative. Animal stories, between the extremes of Ernest Thompson Seton and Cervantes (between the sentimental naturalist and the brilliant parodist), are extraordinarily rare. As if prompted by some veterinarian Dr. S., Argo's "memoirs" begin: "There exist three smells in this world: the master's smell, the smell of other men, Titi's smell, the smell of different kinds of animals . . . and

finally the smell that things have." The computation is accurately inexact since dogs can only count to three. At one point Argo exclaims, "So many dogs crossed our path today! Three!" Within the limits of its absurdity Svevo creates an impressive fragment of "canine psychology." Surely, however, we are justified in singling out "La novella del buon vecchio" and "Il mio ozio" as the best of Svevo in shorter form. They are purely Svevo; their pedigree is personal.

It is in "La novella del buon vecchio" that Svevo sounds a later rendition of the theme insistent in *Senilità*: now he can create a really old hero in love with a young girl. As in the novel, the narrative is third-person; the reflections engendered by the situation are impartially and impersonally profound in their Svezian irony. "When a really young man falls in love, his love often causes reactions in his brain that soon have nothing to do with his desire. How many youths there are who, though they could find peaceful bliss in some hospitable bed, cause havoc at least in their own houses under the impression that to go to bed with a woman it is necessary first to conquer, create or destroy. Old men, however, who are said to be better protected against the passions, surrender to them in full awareness and climb into the bed of sin only with proper precautions against catching cold." There is also in the old man of the story a sense of the ridiculous; but he hides it from himself, so that the ironic "neutral" commentary must bear the weight of total awareness. Actually, it is in this narrative that the reader will find the fullest measure in Svevo's works of knowing irony and compassion. The old hero is caught between age and youth, love and jealousy, real life and actual dreams: typical of a Svezian hero he begins to feel his mission as a writer. Somehow he must commit to writing his wisdom as a man of the world; somehow the girl must be warned against the danger of love, with the young, but especially with the old. As elsewhere with Svevo's fictional authors, the title precedes composition: in this case it is "Concerning Relations between Age and Youth." According to its "theory," youth must rely upon their healthy and wise elders to insure a

utopian future. But eventually death, the resolver, writes "finis" to the unfinished and unfinishable essay.

The theme of love of the old for the young has its culmination, in Svevo's work, in "Il mio ozio," in which the fear of death comes out into the open as the prime mover. In "La novella del buon vecchio" the absurdities of the old man's situation are expressed in his doctor's words: "You may not visit your mistress until I allow you to." He is reduced ludicrously to the status of a child, an old baby; such is the indignity of age. But in "Il mio ozio" love is viewed by the old man in that story more frontally as a prophylactic, a sure cure against death. We are back in the circuit of Zeno and its familiar cast of characters; it is, however, a later generation and the speaker is now a contemporary of "il buon vecchio." The whole scheme is somehow to fool mother nature. Her purpose is to keep alive an organism so long as it can reproduce itself; therefore, to take a mistress is the only way to stay alive. The crux of the comedy is the unexpected encounter between the speaker and his contemporary Misceli whom he catches as a fellow client in the rooms of Signorina Felicita. At the end all kinds of muted ironies pour forth when he is called an "old lecher" (*vecchio satiro*). Still, he has already set his "adventure" in perspective: almost unwittingly he exposes himself to the ultimate depredation of mother nature.

Of the two other stories worthy to be counted among his best work, "Proditoriamente" ("Stealthily" or "Treacherously") is the simplest. It is a laceratingly comic treatment of death (one could imagine it illustrated by the cartoonist Steig). Signor Meier comes as a suppliant to ask a loan of Signor Reveni who is obviously going to refuse when he suddenly has a fatal heart attack. Business affairs are seen under the aspect of death. Who is better off? The man who died or the man about to be ruined? Clearly the circumstances of death could have become even more overtly than in his novels one of Svevo's masterful themes: witness also the fragment "La morte." But death caught the author in the act. Much richer than "Proditoriamente" is the long story "Una burla riuscita" (translated as *The Hoax*), in which the

major theme is that dialectical relationship between literature and life. Once again the hero, Mario Samigli, has written a novel in his youth, and now he transforms his aged reality, lived out with his ailing brother, into little fables about sparrows. His spent literary ambitions are cruelly revived by a monstrous hoax perpetrated by a certain Gaia. Mario, the butt, is all the more susceptible because he has the imagination of a novelist, always ready to accept and transform *données* through artistic rationalization, through the imagination. But the crude success of the joke is tempered by Mario's mild revenge and his final transmutation of the whole affair into a fable of sparrows.

Transmutation of life into art is the ground of any novelist's effort. And, since *Don Quijote*, the fecund confusion of art and life has been a persistent theme in fiction. It is important, however, to note that with Svevo, in contrast to Stendhal and Flaubert, the confusion results not from the social evil of "bad literature" but from the constant inward need to confront life with its ideal model. So well-known a theme, exploited by Hawthorne and James, is given by Svevo its most profound, if not its richest, treatment; for the stress is not on the artist *manqué* and his disillusionments, but on the continuing interpenetration of art and life and on the close relationship between imagination and rationalization. This, then, despite its relation to other well-known themes, is one of Svevo's most original.

We have now encountered all Svevo's major themes: his special view of art and life; the urge to confront life and wrest it into wilful shape; life as sickness; the illusion of old age as curable by love or art or even the Steinach operation. They all seem to point toward some state of serenity in which all is fulfilled: for the young Alfonso Nitti it is age or, as it turns out, death; for Emilio Brentani, age thirty-five, it is the gilded memory of love; for Zeno Cosini it is, finally and petulantly (though one suspects only momentarily), the apocalypse. It would, I suppose, be possible to make all the themes coordinate and suggest that their ultimate unity emanates from Ettore Schmitz. But from the literary point of view such an obvious though ulti-

mately fallacious deduction would be irrelevant. It is interesting to see how the Svevian themes transform and coalesce from work to work. When taken out of time and context, however, they incur the ever present risk of literary themes in the abstract: they become commonplaces. It is enough, then, to view them in their proper setting and to give some account of their relation and eventual irreducibility.

In Italian critical evaluation of Svevo, which still continues sparse, the most constant complaint is that Svevo wrote unforgivably bad Italian. His themes may be depressing, but his style is execrable. Certainly it must be admitted that Svevo's style is sometimes cacophonic and, in general, not standard. But then the question immediately arises of what is standard Italian, and we have again the *questione della lingua*. Almost everyone, including Tuscans, experiences the discrepancy between the written and the spoken language, or better, between *langue* and *parole*. When one's "dialect" is not only viable but pervasive, the problem of communicating in the standard language is even more exacerbated. Zeno, in fact, finds the problem fundamental: "And then the doctor attaches too much importance to those confessions of mine, which he refuses to give back so that I may look at them again. By God! He has only studied medicine, and so he has no idea what writing in Italian means to us who talk dialect but cannot express ourselves in writing. A written confession is always mendacious. We lie with every word we speak in the Tuscan tongue! If only he knew how we tend to talk about things for which we have the words all ready, and how we avoid subjects which would oblige us to look up words in the dictionary! That is the principle which guided me when it came to putting down certain episodes in my life. Naturally it would take on quite a different aspect if I told it in our own dialect." But his complaint is as universally convincing as Tyutchev's famous poetic utterance: "a thought once expressed is a lie." Still, the problem remains to be faced; to write in the standard language can be a valuable means of stylization. Svevo has, in fact, created a "stylized" style

whose value has been lost on most Italian critics. Far from being a merely clumsy provincial whose Italian is much inferior to D'Annunzio's and Emilio Cecchi's, Svevo is the originator of his own version of what should be called a "spoken style." Most of the time he is describing the thoughts of his characters in their own terms (what in German is called *erlebte Rede*). He is seldom the aloof observer "translating" his characters' thoughts into impartial and self-consciously cultivated discourse. That his writing matured in the great age of *prosa d'arte* or *prosa magica* was perhaps his major misfortune as an artist wishing domestic fame. The continuing neglect of Svevo in Italy is perhaps also a reaction against the nineteenth-century novel and a conditioned predilection for the *Zeitgeist* in apogee: the vigorous, but waning, cult of "neo-realism." Even Moravia, seemingly so close to Svevo in his method of psychological delineation, has asserted that he never really read Svevo; on the face of it, his prose style with its spare elegance could hardly be likened to Svevo's. It is the contemporary individualists in style, such as Vittorini, Comisso and Gadda, who most successfully challenge the shibboleths of *poesia* and *non poesia* and the complacency of the surviving practitioners of *prosa d'arte* and *toscanità*. Their modest ingenuousness and honest workmanship remind one of the isolated Svevo.

The evolution of Italian prose style from the nineteenth to the twentieth century is a fascinating question still in need of treatment. In judging such matters the foreigner, at least in final evaluation, is at great disadvantage. He may easily be intimidated by conflicting views of the "natives." To take an instance from another literature, what conclusion can the foreigner draw from the diametrically opposed evaluations of the prose style of Lermontov as vouchsafed by two critics, Prince Mirsky and Professor Nabokov, so obviously masters of the Russian language? According to Mirsky, "Lermontov's prose is the best Russian prose ever written, if we judge by the standards of perfection and not by those of wealth." According to Nabokov, "Lermontov's prose style in Russian is inelegant; it is dry and drab . . ." Clearly, terms need defining. As with Lermontov, so with

Svevo, some thoroughgoing study is needed, even by a foreigner. Here the problem is only sketched, since the purpose of this essay is merely to attempt the preliminaries to a full stylistic analysis.

Svevo's greatest and least alienable virtue is his tone. Its pervasive irony is quiet and unobtrusive. Yet it provides, more than any other element of style, a basis on which to generalize his world view. To sketch it at all, one would have to include what I have already said about the quality of his irony and go on from there to generalize about the creatures he created. Svevo's women usually have either the quiet and resigned competence of Ada and Augusta or the unreflective vitality of Angiolina and the "bella fanciulla." The great exception is, of course, Amalia in *Senilità*, and she may be called his most impressive female character. Generally, the men are divided between those cursed by thought and those blest by vitality. Svevo makes no choice between them, thus preserving his work from the propagandistic bias so common in the novel. True, he chooses to single out the thoughtful as his heroes, but their fate is seldom triumph; it is most often outward defeat. Yet their very thoughtfulness allows them to galvanize their powers of rationalization and insures them an inward, though Pyrrhic, victory. The vital opponents, the deuteragonists, are left mostly "unpunished;" implicitly, their fate is an old age in which their vitality ironically wanes or simply dies. The reader may well feel that it is they who are ultimately the most exposed. As for the milieu in which they perform, it is difficult to say whether Svevo accepts any familiar social conventions at all. Like most writers, to speak biographically, he was a bourgeois who wrote about bourgeois. Even apart from Svevo, however, that term desperately needs defining. From a reading of his fiction it would hardly be possible to assert either that Svevo accepted or that he rejected "bourgeois values." He stays aloof as a fascinated observer. For that reason it would be inaccurate to call Svevo a satirist: he neither holds folly up to ridicule nor vice up to scorn. He can most meaningfully be called a universal ironist.

All the main elements of Svevo's fiction seem without strain to form a consistent system. His themes, while concerning most intimately the average intelligent man, derive from eternal perplexities of life, death, and relations with others. Over them flickers the ironic understanding of a narrator who is neither complacent nor superior. They are expressed in a style adequate to their expression; it is a style that nearly always follows the contours of the characters' thoughts and rarely risks (and risks at great peril) any axiom or censure of conduct. All the while point of view (in James's sense) is not lacking, since the ventriloquistic *raisonneur* may always be defined as the hero-observer. Svevo's negative virtue, though still part of his positive achievement, is his impartiality; he is one of the most truly objective of novelists. One of the very few contenders in that category would be Hemingway in *The Sun Also Rises* and some of the stories. Perhaps the lack of partiality or partisanship renders Svevo less attractive, since the prevailing trend of the novel, taking the good with the bad, is to promote some particular view or assert "positive values." Yet there is artistic integrity in the refusal or failure to do so. What we witness in Svevo is almost a return to the free valence of Boccaccio without his ultimate irresponsibility. By concern for the local and the particular and by his impartiality and special irony Svevo achieves in purely artistic fashion a kind of "internationalism" that recognizes "nations" only as casual grounds for fiction. He is another writer, among many, who creates the universal in the concrete. In Italian fiction surely Svevo is the greatest novelist between Verga and the present. It is difficult to measure his genius against the European novel from the nineteenth century to the present. If we leave aside the question of his relative greatness, however, we are in a clear position to assert his extraordinary originality. Svevo is a *rara avis* in European literature; in Italian literature he is, for better or worse, a phoenix.

NOTE

All three of Svevo's novels are currently available in Italian editions. His posthumous and fugitive pieces have been published

by Mondadori in two volumes edited by Umbro Apollonio: *Corto viaggio sentimentale* (1949) and *Saggi e pagine sparse* (1954). The most interesting set of correspondence published so far appeared as "Carteggio inedito Italo Svevo-James Joyce" in *Inventario* (II, i, 1949), edited and introduced by Harry Levin, in a bilingual edition with English versions by Oreste Pucciani. Svevo has found a gifted translator in Beryl de Zoete (sometimes a bit free but always loyal to English idiom). *Confessions of Zeno* was first published in America in 1930; it was reissued in 1947 with a preface by Renato Poggioli (New Directions) and has since reappeared without preface as a Knopf Vintage Book (1958). *Senilità* appeared in English under the title *As a Man Grows Older* with an introduction by Stanislaus Joyce (1932); later it was reissued by New Directions (1949) with the addition of a longish "Note on Svevo" by Edouard Roditi. Beryl de Zoete has also produced an English version of "Una burla riuscita" (*The Hoax*, 1930), and Lacy Collison-Morley one of "La novella del buon vecchio e della bella fanciulla" (in *The Nice Old Man and the Pretty Girl and Other Stories*, 1930). "Il mio ozio" has been translated by Ben Johnson as "This Indolence of Mine;" it is most immediately available in *Great Italian Short Stories*, edited by P. M. Pasinetti (Dell Books, 1959).

For intensive accounts in English of Svevo the novelist one can begin and almost end with the introductions by Poggioli and Roditi. The best short account of Svevo's life is Professor Bruno Maier's in *Dizionario letterario degli autori* (Bompiani: Milan, 1957). In English one must rely on *Twentieth Century Authors*, edited by S. J. Kunitz and H. Haycraft (New York, 1942). The account in the *Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature* is very thin. The fullest biography of Svevo is a short and intimate *Vita di mio marito* by Livia Veneziani Svevo (*sic*), written in collaboration with Lina Galli (Trieste 1951). Bruno Maier is the historian of the *caso Svevo*. He has exhaustively assembled the evidence in the preface and bibliographies of the omnibus volume of *Opere* issued by Dall'Oglio and in *Italo Svevo e la critica straniera* (Trieste 1956).

For the sake of completeness I should mention that I have taken no account of Svevo's plays; they are not all published yet and the ones that are shed no new light on his main skill.

Some Remarks on the Development of Sociology in Italy and the U.S.

| MINO VIANELLO

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A subject of this kind, however properly safeguarded by the title chosen, cannot fail to pose a difficult problem. Its proper treatment requires the marshalling of a great deal of data, only part of which is at my disposal. The drawing up of an essay which attempts even schematic completeness demands a precise knowledge of the background from which sociology originated, and, above all, detailed knowledge of the growth of the subject, in both countries.

Since these conditions have only been partially satisfied, the present article is intended merely as a set of notes, based on direct observation and organized under certain headings which seem to me to be the most important. In comparing the growth of sociology in Italy and the United States, I shall proceed from material structure to scientific development, leaving philosophy for the last.

First, let us consider the physical structure of the field: that is, the institutions (universities, research institutes, government agencies, associations, and periodicals) which are, in our time, the foundation of the development of any science. A rapid survey of the facilities available in the two countries

is sufficient to show the great difference that exists in this area. In the United States sociology has undergone a tremendous development during the last seventy years. The growth of the science in Italy, on the other hand, has been of very modest proportions; only since the end of the last war has it achieved scientific recognition and acceptance. As a result, Italian sociology has not yet been able to take advantage of the division of labor which characterizes the field in America.

Later in this essay I shall describe in detail the factors which, in my opinion, are responsible for this discrepancy. Here it is enough to say that the fundamental orientation of the American man appears to me to be at the heart of the matter. The American desire for a better way of life, the emphasis on the rational solving of problems on a concrete rather than on an abstract level, creates a climate of opinion which is extremely favorable for the development of sociology. Basically, sociology is conceived as a means for controlling the environment. In Italy, on the other hand, this empirical, rationalistic, and pragmatic attitude towards life is rare; sociology is far from being considered an effective means of political and social action, and the science is in a far weaker condition.

In America the universities are numerous and generally flourishing, although few of them are exempt from the serious defects common to the American educational system. In Italy, on the contrary, the universities are weak from the material point of view; they lack the equipment and facilities necessary to meet the present need for higher education.

It must also be kept in mind that in the United States sociology was in a favorable position because it was established as a science at about the same time as the creation of the first graduate schools. As a result, it was introduced into their curriculums with comparative ease; we find that the first professorship of sociology in America, at the University of Chicago, goes back to the founding of that institution. In Italy, on the other hand, the beginnings of sociology coincided with the growth of fascism. Under the fascist

philosophy of triumphant idealism, all the branches of the social sciences were set aside, and the country was forced into a condition of intellectual decline.

Two other related factors helped to emphasize sociology in American higher education: first, the influence of the local political authorities in favor of courses directed towards practical preparation for a vocation (above all in the universities of the South and Middle West, which are largely state-supported); and second, the spread of the so-called "life-adjustment" curriculum, which necessarily included sociology. In Italy, on the other hand, much greater stress has been given to the study of the humanities and abstract subjects; the individual's achievement of maturity is still considered a problem which must be solved on the basis of certain general principles.

As a result of all these factors, American universities have for decades included not only professorships but departments of sociology. In Italy, there are only a few professorships which have been established with difficulty here and there. Almost all of them are temporary appointments, involving low rates of pay, and lacking adequate facilities and means for research.

The prevailing rationalism of the United States caused the government to become the second important source of support for sociological research. All sociologists are familiar with the investigations made under government auspices during the Depression, and the later studies by Stouffer on the American soldier. The post-war period has seen a growing interest on the part of the government in sociological research (for example, on the subjects of mental health, Russian society, urban development, etc.). In Italy, apart from the inquiry into unemployment (assuming that this can be considered to have a sociological character), the government has not, so far as I know, promoted any sociological studies of importance.

In America, too, much support has been given to the development of sociology by the business world which has not only aided research of a practical nature, but also contributes notably to the study of such phenomena as publicity

and communication. A considerable number of sociologists are directly employed by business. In Italy the most advanced businessmen are only now becoming interested in the possible use of sociology in the industrial world.

The beneficial and basically liberal activity of the great American foundation, which is well known all over the world, has no equivalent in Italy. This is not due to lack of funds, since several foundations are operating in the field of the arts, but to a basically different mental attitude.

In America, where sociology was early established as an independent discipline, its influence has now extended to many other disciplines—not only those nearly related, but those as remote and dissimilar as medicine and engineering. In Italy, young people who are preparing to go into different professions ignore sociology completely; yet many enterprises pursuing the most different aims make use of sociological discoveries in their daily activity.

During the last five years, a growing interest in sociology has been notable in Italy. Some evidences of this interest are the research projects sponsored by both public and private organizations (especially by the *Movimento Comunità* of Adriano Olivetti), the growing number of sociological journals, and the founding of the Italian Association of Social Sciences, which held its first meeting in 1957. There is no shortage of interested young men and women who are aware of the needs of their own culture and of the developments of sociology abroad; but the opportunism of the government (on which the universities depend), the indifference of the public, and the insufficient training of the few teachers of sociology, make future progress in this essential field uncertain. From the material point of view, the difference between the development of sociology in Italy and in America is not so much a question of funds and physical resources, as of habits of mind.

Next, let us consider the development of sociology as a science. In America, it has attained a considerable level of maturity. Having started as an eminently empirical pursuit, it has now (thanks especially to Parson's work), filled

the theoretical gaps that first characterized it. The work of this noted Harvard sociologist, however, has not been without practical consequences of great importance: I refer, for instance, to the empirical researches on Japan and Great Britain which were stimulated by Parson's writings. Remarkable progress in the field of methodology has been made in recent years, due mainly to the fruitful work of Lazarsfeld. In the United States, integration of the constituent elements of a discipline (theory, methodology, and research) is achieved by the sound organization of data based on experience.

In Italy, sociology (where it exists) is still often considered as the "philosophy of society;" until a short time ago, philosophy and sociology were seen as opposing disciplines. Even when this is not the case, sociology takes on a highly speculative character, and direct research is relegated to a secondary position. In this matter, one must bear in mind the great influence of Croce on Italian culture. Traces of this influence can be found in the attitudes of those who teach sociology; very often they are engaged in research of a historical character. We should also recall the medivalizing trend which, mainly for political reasons, is now spreading in Italy. Because of these factors, very little room is left for research of an empirical nature.

After all, it is mainly in the mental habits of a past now gone forever, but still widely cultivated, that we must look for the causes of the present backward condition of sociology, (and also of psychology, psychoanalysis, social psychology, and anthropology) in Italy today. The same attitudes tend to discourage the specialization and division of labor which is necessary for the operation of a modern institute of sociology. The distrust of sociological investigations on the part of the masses is another obstacle in the way of practical research.

The belief that it is the study of specific problems which justifies the existence of sociology, has recently made some headway in Italy, but up until now abstract tendencies have continued to prevail. If we follow discussions of these matters, however, we shall see that both sides agree on the

necessity for integration of the sciences. This is a favorable sign, and one which encourages us to have hopes for the future development of Italian society.

However, there are two elements which seem to oppose the integration of the sciences. First, there is the fact that integration is made possible only by a deep and widespread awareness of the function that cooperation among the sciences can perform in society. This awareness does not seem to have reached a sufficiently high level in Italy. It is especially difficult to see how integration can be hastened, especially when one considers the bureaucratic obstacles which would arise in the universities. Second, there is the opposition to any kind of integration based on a concept or a method, for fear of reviving sociology with a capital S.

Italian sociologists might profit in this respect from a study of the remarkable results attained by American sociology in the integration of theory, methodology, and empirical research (it will suffice to mention Lipset's *Union Democracy*); and of the almost definitive conclusions reached on such subjects as the relation between child training and social class, electoral behavior, etc.

On the other hand, there is an area in which Italian sociology has much to teach American sociology; and that is the area of historical studies, which have undergone exceptional development in Italy. In America history is used only as a casual source of examples. This is the consequence not only of the American tradition, but of the intense training which students of sociology must undergo in the United States, which does not allow time for the study of other subjects. The interest shown in Italy in cultural anthropology, for example, should be understood mainly as a symptom of the historical orientation of the best in Italian culture. The naturalistic inclination of Anglo-Saxon culture is unresponsive to this kind of subject, and tends to imply a rather crude attitude towards historical matters. In Italy at present there is a trend towards the fusion of cultural anthropology and the sociology of knowledge; if properly carried out, this movement could benefit the science of sociology in general.

If we look deep enough, it is not difficult to discern the basic motive of the most recent trends in Italian sociology (the importance of which, at present, should not be overestimated). It is the wish to impose a new orientation on the development of sociology, one which can offer not only the possibility of achieving deeper knowledge of the sciences of man, but also the possibility of placing them at the foundations of political and social life. This is one of the many proofs of the remarkable influence which American culture has had on Italian culture since the war. In return, we must hope that American sociologists will grow more aware of the values of philosophy and historiography, without which their work runs the risk of becoming meaningless.

Let us look finally at the philosophical background of sociology. The spirit which animates American sociologists is emphatically "liberal." This is due to two factors: first, the democratic tradition which emphasizes the equal welfare of all men; and second, the social origin of American sociologists, most of whom come from the lower-middle class or are political refugees. This liberalism, however, almost never becomes radicalism, for it is full of the empirical spirit and consequently hostile to all ideologies. In practice the American sociologist accepts the typical pluralism of the world he lives in, and studies its processes with the intention of exposing those phenomena which tend to work against individual freedom. This intention is deeply felt: sociology courses are compulsory in all colleges, and there are no textbooks in which the liberal attitude is not evident — in relation to such topics as the Negro problem, for example. It is worth remembering that even the American Supreme Court has had recourse to the work of sociologists in this regard: a memorandum written by a group of sociologists was included as an appendix to the famous decision on desegregation. American sociologists have also given significant help to the activity of the labor unions, which play an important part in the life of the nation.

In Italy this liberal attitude is typical of only a minority of sociologists. The fundamental interests of the majority

are of a speculative nature, as mentioned above; in practice, they are interested in providing an abstract justification for a chosen ideology, or even a political position. In order to understand the present state of sociology in Italy, one must keep in mind the whole framework of values which characterizes the Italian tradition.

There is no doubt that a systematic and intelligent exchange of information between the scholars of Italy and America would prove very useful for the former, and not negligible for the latter. An essential first step in such an exchange would be the preparation of a detailed historical, statistical, and sociological study on the topic of this brief essay. This is an important task which should be started as soon as possible.

Translated by Vincenzo Traversa

The Particular Poetic World of Eugenio Montale

| MARIA SAMPOLI SIMONELLI

With Translations from Montale's Works

| MARK MUSA

[Mrs. Maria Sampoli Simonelli taught for six years at the University of Florence and is now directing Fulbright Fellows in Florence. She was a student of Mario Casella's and was his assistant at the University of Florence until his death. She has published extensively on Dante in *Dante Studies*. She has made important contributions to studies on the *Convivio*. She has also done significant work on Boccaccio. She is married to an Italian writer, Furio Sampoli, whose first novel will be published by Vallecchi this fall.

Mr. Mark Musa has been the recipient of a Fulbright Grant for study in Italy and is now completing his doctoral work at Johns Hopkins University. He has translated Dante's *Vita Nuova*, and his translation was warmly received by Dante scholars.]

To talk about Montale's poetics is above all to talk about his *Ossi di seppia* (1925). His later collections of poems - *Occasioni* (1939), *Bufera* (1956) - do not modify the position assumed and lived by Montale from his very early poetic experiences: "Meriggiare pallido . . ." (*Ossi di seppia*, p. 46), dated 1916. In the collections following the *Ossi* the poet merely continues to investigate his problem more profoundly and to develop his particular poetic language further. It is in his particular poetic language rather than in his subjects that Montale attempts modification. He adopts a more extensive and more narrative style,

which remains open to exterior happenings. But in speaking of such a modification, one must proceed with caution, for even in the *Ossi*, created during a moment in which Italian poetry in its search for the purely essential shunned any type of narrative expedient, Montale's narrative taste is already evident; not so much in the poems themselves as in the conscious construction of the collection. It is not unusual for the "opera prima" of a poet to represent a fixed point in the spiritual life of the poet. Moreover, in most cases the "opera prima" is something more than an attempt: it is the presentation and clarification of the particular poetic world of the writer. Once formulated and expressed through various sounds and images, this poetic world unconsciously restricts the poet and often prevents an interior development by fixing him once and for all in the position which he himself has created.

This, in a way, has happened to Montale. After the *Ossi* Montale's poetry always found itself faced with a hopeless ontological limit established by the poems themselves. He had two choices: either to negate his earlier works, or in some way to repeat in continuous prismatizations the same inevitable ideas. He has chosen the latter path. And perhaps it is for this reason that the name Montale immediately brings to mind the *Ossi di seppia*, just as the name Leopardi immediately brings to mind the *Idilli*. Only on second thought does one recall the *Occasioni* (and certain poems of this collection such as "Dora Markus" or "La casa dei doganieri") and the recent *Bufera*. Montale's "stuttering language" ("balbo parlare"), so rich and carefully thought out, is already to be found in *Ossi* as is his equilibrium, "uneven and essential" at the same time; his poetic world as well is expressed (and always in such a way as to remain in accord with his basic premises). In the *Ossi*, too, Montale's particular "philosophy" first presented itself, already inevitably closed to any development whatsoever.

That Montale's poetry originates from a negative position, from a belief in non-existence or from a non-gnosis, has been known for some time now. But to write poetry is always a gnosis or way of becoming conscious; a way of

learning about oneself and the world which surrounds one, one's own drama in relation to the self as well as in relation to external realities. To arrive at such a consciousness Montale looks inside himself with a searching and pitiless glance until he feels or even sees a terrible anguish from which there is no hope of escape: he sees the evil of life itself. For him, all of nature suffers. And each thing suffers in accordance with its capacity to suffer, in its own particular way:

it was the strangled stream that gurgles,
it was the crumbling of the leaf
dried-out, it was the horse fallen battered.

(*Ossi di seppia*, p. 52)

In man this suffering becomes intellectual, metaphysical. His doom consists of aspiring for a happiness which is pure illusion; in aspiring for it and at the same time being fully aware that it is an illusion; in searching for a truth which continually escapes him, a truth which is always beyond his grasp. The human condition is symbolized as the useless strain of searching for a "broken thread in the net which encloses us" ("In limine"); "the link which does not hold, /the thread to disentangle, which finally places us/in the middle of a truth" ("I limoni"); "the apparition that saves you." During certain vague moments of lucidity ("and in the breast a sweetness rains") it seems that man almost understands this elusive mystery: but it is an illusion which immediately dissolves and the "blue" once again "shows itself only in pieces," "the light becomes meager - mean the soul" ("I limoni"). It is the illusion of a moment which betrays and disheartens but nevertheless encourages man to take up the search once again, because it leaves behind the desire for a lost promise, for the solarly of the golden horns.

This is subject matter quite close to that of Leopardi. It lacks, however, the vague, "il pellegrino," the melancholy of Leopardi; it has become pure dialectic which lives and thrives on the intelligence, almost eliminating all sentiment "a priori." The affective life is as if darkened; the very words have become meager, pale, fit for the posing of the

same agitating, unsolved and unsolvable problem: the cognitive or ontological problem. If Leopardi sought for the "why" of the universe and the life of man, to conclude that "perhaps in whatever form, in whatever/condition he may exist, in cot or cradle/ it is a gloomy birthday for the one just born" ("Canto notturno di un pastore errante dell'Asia"); Montale does not even bother to search, because he assumes the answer to be true from the start. What Montale asks is rather, Of what does this "suffering" consist? that is, he asks the "why" of this suffering, only to conclude that it is a suffering without reason and without purpose; it is an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, a painful desire or longing for something that can never be attained and which resolves itself only in nothing:

And walking in the dazzling sun
to feel with sad bewilderment
what all of life is and its struggle
in this following along a wall
which has on top sharp broken bits of bottle.
(*Ossi di seppia*, p. 46)

It is superfluous to point out how much that is "romantic" is to be found in the content of Montale's poetry. But expressions, the poetic images dissolve into a suffocating weariness of despairing monotony. Things seem always alike but unrelated: they are pure apparitions lacking any deep meaning. Montale's universe is a chaos of monotony which offers no relief. The poetry of the *Ossi* is fixed in the blinding atmosphere of a sultry midday: an atmosphere which renders barren every source of sentiment. It is a midday "tense and burned" of which the early Leopardi already had captured the surprising static quality and in which things appear isolated, detached, desiccated. Their moment is mere apparition, their variation is pure contingency, which returns to present the same vexing problem of staticity.

It is at this point that Montale introduces the most concrete and fascinating of his symbols: the sea. In its continuous flowing movement the sea combines the absolute staticity or motionlessness of man and his appearance of

being in continuous movement. The clarification of this symbol comes in that group of nine poems which in the *Ossi* give life to an extensive colloquy with the sea. "Mediterraneo" is almost a "poemetto" in which the sea has a concealed symbolic value. But it is not an abstract or intellectually forced symbol, rather it is a symbol which is born spontaneously from the very nature of the sea and from Montale's special reaction to it. The sea is life; it is the essence of humanity, dynamic and static at the same time; and the voice of the sea is the very voice of humanity "vast and manifold and at the same time confined" ("Antico, sono ubriacato della tua voce"). In continuous movement, in letting oneself be seized by life, like a pebble or sunflower there is the hope of finding the essential, freedom, "the dreamed-of homeland," "the uncorrupted country." Montale fully understands the problem, but he refuses to accept it. It is his intelligence that does not permit him to abandon himself to life. To the poet the right "to observe" alone is conceded, to view powerlessly the miracle of life without being part of it: he is the "desolate plant," "the dried-out earth," which opens up to allow the blossoming of a pale flower: his poetry, which is powerless to capture the truth and which functions only as a means for relieving his "rancor."

An emotion from which there is no escape, which every Montale poem reveals and almost puts on a level with pleasure, is the joy of self-destruction: "because in confidence, my dear friend, I believe that you are happy and that everyone else is happy; but as far as I am concerned, with your permission and that of the century, I am very unhappy; and I believe myself to be so; and all the newspapers of two worlds will not convince me to the contrary." (G. Leopardi, *Operette morali*, "Dialogo di Tristano e di un amico"). The Leopardian position is adapted to the new drama. Life is for the others; it is for those like Esterina, who find in the sea "the force which tempers" her, and says "in the water you discover yourself and you renew yourself," but it is not for one who "of a race of those who remain earth-bound" is capable only of "watching." Montale knows that he is incapable of solving the cognitive problem, yet he never gives up trying.

It is a titanic battle between his desire to know, which is his intellectual pride, and the limit of knowledge imposed upon every man. Yet "Falsetto" is the most and at the same time the least Leopardian of Montale's poems. That is to say, it is the poem which best reflects Leopardi's imagery and at the same time best reveals Montale's difference from it. Esterina is, in some ways, daughter to Silvia: both are fixed in eternal youth. Esterina, whose twenty years of age threaten her in the form of a rosy-grey cloud which little by little encloses her; Silvia, who is fixed in the memory "when beauty splended in your laughing, agile eyes" and "happy and thoughtful you ascended the threshold of youth." But Silvia already lives in a myth, in the absolute immobility of bland thought, of dreams, of vague expectations. Silvia is an integral part of the poet who created her. Esterina, even though idolized, remains outside the poet: she is of that part of the world which is in opposition to the Montalian "I." Montale can pray for her as he can for the others, but he cannot reassure her in her ignorance of life:

Tomorrow's doubt does not frighten you.

Happily you stretch out
on a reef glistening of salt
and in the sun you burn your body.

You bring to mind the lizard
paused on the barren rock;
for you youth lies in wait
for him the little boy's lasso of grass.

("Falsetto," *Ossi*, p. 19)

The instinctive knowledge that things possess is the very essence of Esterina: it is a particular way of knowing or understanding that really belongs exclusively to childhood, when

Every moment burned
in the succeeding moments without trace
to live was a venture too new
hour by hour, and it made the heart pound.

("La fine dell'infanzia," *Ossi*, p. 39)

Death is not a threat to Silvia but rather a redemption or solution. But Esterina does not die, rather she lives in an inconceivable nightmare, not forthcoming but present. And Montale captures all of the suffering in this. "Go, for you I have prayed;" those most appropriate words from "In limine," are recapitulated at the end of the first stanza of "Falsetto:" "I pray it be/for you an ineffable concert/of tiny bells." The intense cleavage between the poet and his image is still more evident in the closing:

We watch you, we of a race
of those who remain earth-bound.

Esterina does not represent a happiness completely lost, a dream which could have been realized but was not, like Leopardi's Silvia. Rather, she represents a happiness which is denied to whoever desires to know it. To want to know or understand life, the essence of things, is already in itself a denial of our ability to know. To abandon oneself to life and with a "shrug of the shoulders" destroy the fortresses of an obscure tomorrow signifies a capturing of the essence of life without knowing or understanding it; and this is the only way to be able to live beyond the negation.

More than once Montale has attempted the theme of childhood, the age of illusion. Above all, he has attempted to capture the moment of fracture, the breaking point, the painful passage from the naiveté or unawareness of childhood to the unarmed, defeated consciousness of adulthood. from "Falsetto" to "La farandola dei fanciulli," from "Arremba sulla strinata proda" to "La fine dell'infanzia," the same theme is dealt with: perhaps salvation consists in the ability to fix one's very self in eternal childhood, in a long sleep in which "the evil spirits that sail in fleets" can never catch up with one. An impossible means of salvation!

The moment which destroys the slow work of months arrives: now secretly it cracks, now rends it in a tempest.

Life presses down on us: the break from the fallible "certitudes" of childhood "arrives," sometimes slowly and mys-

teriously, other times suddenly and violently, but to escape the break is an impossibility.

The fracture comes: perhaps without a fracas.

Who has constructed feels his condemnation.

("Arremba sulla strinata proda," *Ossi*, p. 66)

In "La fine dell'infanzia" the break is lived as personal memory, and is no longer feared or suffered through another. This poem is among the best constructed and most rich in thought of Montale's first collection. In it the themes which Montale has been unravelling throughout the *Ossi* are recapitulated and clarified in the loose and sad narrative tone of the central part of the poem. The image of the sea in a tempest, which opens and closes the poem, gives it a circular construction. But this image has an analogical value which surpasses its constructive value. The tempest signifies the breaking point in which "the deception was evident," and it is the indication of a painful existence which lasts beyond the breaking point in a world which no longer has "a center." Uncertainty, uneasiness, cognitive impotency accompany "the hour of searching." Everything becomes extraneous, un conceivable, mysterious, closed in upon itself like a raincloud.

Heavy clouds upon a troubled sea
which boiled in our face, soon appeared.

And childhood died in a ring-around-the rosy:

Remote also the place
of childhood which explores
a blocked-in yard as a world.

The Leopardian theme of the illusion, the delightful deception, which accompanies childhood, becomes in Montale the theme of the imaginative consciousness of astonished childhood, when

Things dressed themselves with names,
our world had a center.

Life, after the passage from childhood to adulthood, is nothing more than a fatiguing and useless searching for this

"center;" a spasmodic waiting for the miracle of insight, the sudden ripping away of the veil behind which the truth of all things is hidden. This is a return, therefore, to the central point of Montale's poetry.

A particular moment is expressed in the poems entitled "Sarcofaghi." Here Montale groups together four poems of a particular tone which deal with one poetic motif: the eternal, happy, stable life of art as opposed to the ever-changing, unhappy, uncertain life of man. The relationship with Pirandello is more than evident. Human existence in its continuous and fatal flowing, in its participation in form without ever *becoming* form is a slow and daily death. Montale lingers:

man who passes by . .
Then goes on: in this valley
there is no exchange of dark and light.
Along this way your life has led you,
there is no refuge for you, you are too dead.
(*"Sarcofaghi," Ossi*, p. 31)

The creatures of art glory in an immutable existence. Perceived during a sudden illumination, "in a bland minute"—when nature functions mysteriously through the fantasy of the poet—these creatures remain fixed eternally in their happiness. They are the work of nature and therefore they are life, but a life which is form and for this reason stable and eternal.

. . . in a bland
minute illuminating nature
molds her happy
creatures, mother not step-mother,
in levity of form.
World that sleeps or world that glories
in immutable existence: who can say?

The same conception of art guides both Montale and Pirandello. "Nature serves as the instrument of the human

fantasy in order to continue or carry higher her work of creation," explains Pirandello through the Father in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. But that which in Pirandello is reasoning and dialectics in Montale dissolves into lyrical afterthoughts and images. The very question: "who can say?" shadows the concept with a halo of doubt. Pirandello affirms; Montale doubts. And from this doubt is born that sad and lyrical tone which Pirandello rejects.

But this is not the only point of contact between the two authors. By contact I do not mean a direct Pirandellian influence on the formation of Montale's thought, but rather an independent working-out of the same problem, the conception of which depends on the particular historical-philosophical atmosphere of each author while the affinity of the solutions depends on a certain spiritual affinity between the two. Pirandello and Montale are certainly the Italian writers most representative of an epoch and of a crisis of moral values. But knowledge or cognizance is at the base of ethics: a gnostic solution is also always a solution which implies a human norm of existence, and therefore the solution is a moral one.

The problem or theme of the "truth" is at the center of both Pirandello's art and Montale's poetry. It arises from the search for a plausible reason for the "fear of living." Pirandello, in his last essay on Verga written five years before his death, makes a nearly open confession of the problem: "Almost all the Sicilians," he writes, "have an instinctive fear of life which causes them to close themselves within themselves, lonely, contented by little, so long as it gives them a sense of security" (*Saggi*, Mondadori, p. 435). This fear of life is the hidden poetical core of Pirandello's work, and he feels and suffers this fear in all of its destructive force while he insistently searches for the "why." In Montale the "fear of living" becomes the "evil of living" ("male di vivere"): but his reason for searching for the "why" is analogous to Pirandello's. Pirandello in his inquiry gathers the roots of the drama through the conflict between "life which continuing moves onward and changes, and form which fixes life making it immutable." But the

drama remains beyond the philosophical solution, and it is the drama of man who aspires to life and at the same time fears it. These premises lead to Pirandello's relativism concerning truth. If man could only arrive at *a* truth, stable, certain, unchangeable, a true, undoubtable truth, he could conquer his "fear of living." The norm of his actions would be based on this unchangeable truth finally realized. But the only truth which man is capable of arriving at is a subjective, individual, changeable truth. "The reality of today will be the illusion of tomorrow; and the reality of tomorrow will become even a more fleeting illusion at some future time," Pirandello had written in *Il fu Mattia Pascal*, "anticipating the words of the Father in *Six Characters*. Every man, therefore, has his own truth, but it is a truth which naturally and instinctively cannot satisfy him: man desires not *a* truth but rather *the* truth. Human existence is nothing more than a fatiguing and useless search for an unattainable mystery which perhaps exists within but which presents itself to man behind a thick, impenetrable black veil just as Signora Ponza is presented to the public in the last act of *Così è (se vi pare)*. In Montale relativism disappears, and in its place appears the "contingent" as a moment which passes and is to be grasped; not truth certainly, but rather the complete renunciation of possibility of possessing truth. In Montale, Pirandello's gnostic pessimism is sharpened beyond the point of relativism. There remains only a lyrical opening of disillusioned hope for a miracle. Everyone who lives—by the very fact that he is alive—tends toward movement: towards a movement which gives the sense of life although it is mere appearance or a "glimmer of life." The *Occasioni*, Montale's second collection of poems, are born from this state of mind. In this collection Montale attempts to capture in pure poetry this fleeting moment, the "occasion," the contingent. And his style becomes always more narrative; he makes the momentary impression the only thing that counts and that has an absolute value. Like Arsenio, the most dramatic and autobiographical character in the *Ossi*, Montale now attempts to let himself be taken by the sea, by life; he attempts to leave the "race of those who remain earth-

bound." But "all becomes strange and difficult;" "everything is impossible" ("Carnevale di Gerti"). For a man who thinks or even for a man who has once attempted this road to the mystery, the contingent life is an empty passing of images that have neither sense nor reason. And perhaps this is really the profound reason: one lives thanks to a "tailsman," like Dora Markus, like every man. In accepting the cognitive limit a sporadic and absurd hope gave temporary light. Now this too gives way, and "hell is certain."

One cannot talk about Montale without at least mentioning the value of recollection or memory in the poems of this poet. Memory is the very life of Montale's present poetics: a life which is a "screen of images," which has in itself "the signs of death and of the past." The Montalian memory gathers both past and future, resolving both in pure detached images. If in the *Ossi* Montale had captured the universal chaos of things: each thing independently static, without order and without a goal; in the *Occasioni* he captures the interior chaos of human existence: a collection of separate, unattached images, lacking in both order and aim. Man in his deepest soul mirrors the useless universal life. This is the new and more disconcerting position of Montale, who is so capable of translating into poetry a crisis of faith in oneself and a "transcendancy" which may be cause, order, and harmony of things.

In the *Bufera*, Montale's most recent collection, the two motifs are interwoven, and they mirror each other without finding a solution of "glimmer of light." Montale, like his poetry, develops in an apparition of continual movement, which, in reality, remains in the fixed staticity of everything. Perhaps because of this, the poetical discovery of the sea, which appears in the *Ossi* as pure symbol and pure transfiguration of reality, is so right for Montale. It is a sea outside of us; it is a sea deep within us: all sound and all movement, all changing colors and tones, yet it is always the same. And nothing makes sense; neither the staticity nor the movement. One cancels the other without ever satisfying or being satisfied.

Falsetto

Esterina, your twenty years are threatening you,
rosy-grey cloud
which little by little encloses you.
This you know and do not fear.
Submerged we see you
in the vapor that the wind
tears or thickens with violence.
Then from the billow of ashes you arise
Burned more than ever
ready for a more distant adventure
with face intent resembling
the huntress Diana.
The twenty autumns rise,
gone-by springtimes enclose you;
now for you resounds
a prophecy in the Elysian spheres.
May it not be the sound of a cracked jug
rapped!; I pray it be an ineffable concert
of tiny bells.

Tomorrow's doubt does not frighten you.
Happily you stretch out
on a reef glistening of salt
and in the sun you burn your body.
You bring to mind the lizard
paused on the barren rock:
for you youth lies in wait,
for him the little boy's lasso of grass.
Water is the force which tempers you,
in the water you discover yourself and you renew your-
self:
we think of you as an algae, a pebble,
a creature of the sea
that the saltiness does not corrode
but who returns ashore more pure.

You are so right! Do not disturb
the smiling present with inane fears.

Already your gaiety indebts the future
and a shrug of the shoulders
destroys the fortresses
of your obscure tomorrow.
You arise and walk the slender plank
above the roaring waters:
your profile is incised
upon a background of pearl.
On the trembling plank you hesitate,
then laugh, and as though snipped by a wind
you throw yourself into the arms
of your divine friend who catches you.

We watch you, we of a race
of those who remain earth-bound.

* * *

Lodge the paper boats upon
the dried-out shore, and sleep
little boy master: so that
you may not hear the evil spirits that sail in fleets.
Within the confines of the little orchard the owl
flutters up
and the chimney-smoke on the rooftops is heavy.
The moment which destroys the slow work of months
arrives: now secretly it cracks, now rends it in a tempest.

The fracture comes: perhaps without a fracas.
Who has constructed feels his condemnation.
It is the hour in which the dry-docked boat alone is
saved.
Hide your fleet among the hedges.

Trends

THE MUSIC SITUATION IN CONTEMPORARY ITALY

Verdi and Puccini need no introduction to music lovers. The names of Ottorino Respighi, Alfredo Casella, Gian Francesco Malipiero, and Ildebrando Pizzetti are also well known to the world of music—the last two are still among us, by the grace of God having reached the ages of 77 and 79 years respectively. These four composers represented the best in Italian musical art from about 1920 to about 1940, or from the end of World War I to the beginning of World War II. At one end of the period looms the gigantic figure of Giacomo Puccini, whose works now form the cornerstone of all opera repertoires: at the other end, just before the second World War, stands a group of composers who are, oddly enough, indirect disciples of Arnold Schoenberg. The leader of this group is the 56-year-old Luigi Dallapiccola, an intellectual giant, a seasoned speaker, and a human dynamo with a prodigious memory. A still younger generation of composers owe their *raison d'être* to Anton Webern, a pupil of Schoenberg. Appropriately enough, they call themselves “post-Webernians.” It is rather difficult to predict at this time which one of them will be the most successful. However, the names of Camillo Togni, Luciano Berio, Bruno Maderna, and Luigi Nono have been appearing frequently on programs in Germany as well as in Italy. In addition to their orchestral works, Berio and Maderna compose electronic music in the *Laboratorio Fono-logico* which has been placed at their disposal by the Radio Televisione Italiana in Milan.

The gamut of musical styles expressed by present-day Italian composers runs from tonal to atonal with various modifications of the two systems in between. However, most

modern composers are dodecaphonists. Attempts to introduce a microtonal system by S. Baglioni (in 1924) and L. Cavallini (in 1936) were futile. The use of folk tunes in serious music which played such an important role in the music of Bartok, Copland, De Falla, Milhaud, Sibelius, and Vaughn Williams is almost unknown in Italy. Aware of this void, the National Center for the Study of Folk Music at the Academy of Santa Cecilia in Rome has recently embarked on a much-needed study—the collection and preservation of old folk music (songs and dances). It is said that such regions as Piemonte, Veneto, Calabria, and Sicily are still rich in musical folklore.

Among the traditional composers Giulio Viozzi is a prominent figure. A professor of composition at the Liceo Musicale in Trieste, Viozzi began composing in the older or traditional manner, experimented with atonality (the absence of a key center) and tone rows, and eventually scrapped these in favor of polytonality (the use of two or more keys simultaneously), which, he maintains, has more audience appeal. Among his more successful compositions are his *Overture Carsica*, which won an award at the International Music Festival in Venice in 1953; a one-act opera, *Un intervento notturno*, based on a novel by Robert Adger Bowen of Greenville, South Carolina; and an exciting violin concerto recently performed by Franco Gulli, Italy's foremost violin virtuoso. That his chamber music is highly regarded is attested by the fact that his *Trio* for violin, cello, and piano (1957) has been frequently performed by the Trio di Trieste.

The opposite end of the stylistic spectrum is represented by Luciano Berio and Bruno Maderna, whose electronic compositions are often the butt of heated controversies. I was present at a concert of contemporary instrumental and electronic music in Rome on April 30, 1959, where music by Marinuzzi, Evangelisti, Stockhausen, Petrassi, Henze, Maderno, Berio, and Boulez was performed. To my amazement, whether due to the novelty of the compositions, the electronic equipment, the blue-book list of composers (most of whom were present), the stellar performers (Magda

Laszlo, Pierre Boulez, and Severino Gazzelloni), or the selective audience of avant-garde enthusiasts, the electronic compositions elicited greater applause than the instrumental and vocal music. Composers of instrumental music are unanimously of the opinion that although electronic music is still in its infancy and therefore in the experimental stage, these experiments will some day reap rewarding results. Electronic composers, on the other hand, maintain that although the science of producing synthetic tones through electronics is young (the first attempts date back to 1951), there is no need to apologize for it: the results attained are as genuinely musical as those using instrumental means. Moreover, electronic music has a great advantage over instrumental music in that no performers are required. The listener will hear a true performance un-marred by wrong notes and nervousness, unadulterated by artistic license, and devoid of prima donna behaviorisms.

In between these extremes flows the main stream of Italian music composition. Among the members of this group are Dallapiccola, Petrassi, Riccardo Malipiero, Antonio Veretti, Mario Peragallo, and Vittorio Fellegara. They are of the opinion that Schoenberg's novel approach to composition was the greatest contribution to musical architecture within the past 35 years. The adoption of the 12-tone system by these composers did not necessarily imply the complete abnegation of Italian tradition. In all cases the Schoenbergian system was modified to suit the personal needs of the individual composer. Although the basic tenets of the 12-tone system were retained, the Italians imbued their music with a glowing warmth not usually associated with the music of their Austrian counterparts. Dallapiccola's opera, *Il prigioniero* (1949), his *Due studi* (1946), his cantata, *An Martha* (1956); Peragallo's *Violin Concerto* (1954); Malipiero's *String Quartet No. 2* (1954); Veretti's ballet, *I setti peccati* (1954) are all excellent examples of the manner in which Italian composers have used and Italianized a foreign product.

Does it seem strange to the American, that although dodecaphony was born and bred in Vienna, it attracted a

large number of Italian composers? That the land of Verdi, Puccini, Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Alfano, and Boito with its almost unilateral predominance of a mellifluous vocal line could have fostered and nurtured a dodecaphonic following? The role of Italian opera in music history is tremendous — its influence far-reaching. As late as 1800 no European composer thought of himself as having arrived unless he had composed at least a dozen operas. Mozart's greatest masterpieces are his operas; Gluck's output was operatic, as was Wagner's. Beethoven lamented the fact that he could not find a worthy libretto to set to music. Opera production was and perhaps is the goal of every Italian composer. However, the total picture has changed. The output of non-operatic music now far surpasses the number of operas composed. It is interesting to note that there is a predilection for instrumental music with the addition of a voice or voices. Thus, the symphonic ground surrendered to the great German romanticists of the 19th century has been regained. The person directly responsible for having opened the doors to the new techniques and styles beyond the Alps is Alfredo Casella. It is to his credit that Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* was introduced to Italian audiences—not, however, without opposition. Most composers of his generation were strongly imbued with Italian operatic tradition and to compose in a newer idiom was tantamount to sacrilege. Besides, the fascist regime viewed atonal compositions with suspicion and discouraged their performance. It was not until the end of the Second World War that many Italian composers began to study the music of Schoenberg and his disciples.

Pupils and friends speak of Casella as an admirable composer, but his qualities as a teacher draw the highest praise. Casella possessed all the attributes of a successful pedagogue: a warm personality, unstinting devotion to his art, a thorough command of his field (both composition and piano) and an uncanny ability to get from each student his maximum effort. In 1958, eleven years after his death, Ricordi Music Publishers issued a *Symposium* of musical essays dedicated to the memory of Casella. The collaborators were Dante Alderighi, Fedele d'Amico, Guido Gatti, Gia-

nandrea Gavazzeni, Mario Labroca, Massimo Mila, Gastone Rossi-Doria, Guido Turchi, Roman Vlad, and Emilia Zanetti; it was a touching tribute from his friends and pupils.

Italian composers have always been partial to the human voice. It can be truthfully stated that this voluntary slavery to the beauty of music made by vocal means was directly responsible for the neglect of instrumental music in the nineteenth century. The twentieth century witnessed a revival of symphonic music, thanks to the efforts of Respighi and Casella. The 1940's saw the reunion of voices and instruments—not according to earlier operatic standards, whereby instruments were used as a larger guitar — but as equal partners. Among the first composers to follow this path were Goffredo Petrassi and Luigi Dallapiccola — the former in his *Coro di morti* (1941), a dramatic madrigal for male voices, three pianos brass, and percussion; and the latter in his *Liriche greche, cinque frammenti di Saffo* (1942), for soprano and 15 instruments.

Of unusual interest is the modern preference of non-Italian texts for instrumental works employing a voice or voices. Dallapiccola stated that he preferred either Latin or German because 1) the wide intervallic leaps particularly characteristic of dodecaphony are closer in spirit to these less euphonious languages than to the more musical Italian, 2) the Italian language is too commonplace a medium, and 3) the use of a foreign language offers a challenge insofar as the problem of text-setting is concerned. The writer points to his *An Mathilde*, a cantata for soprano and orchestra on a poem by Heinrich Heine, his *Goethe-Lieder*, Petrassi's *Salmo IX* for mixed voices, strings, brass, 2 pianos, and percussion; Roman Vlad's *De Profundis*; and Giorgio Ghedini's *Concerto funebre per Duccio Galimberti* for tenor, bass, strings, trombones, and tympany.

Modern composers have been unanimous in their strong criticism of the lack of a musical education in the public and parochial schools at all levels. Whereas most other European countries at least encourage choral singing in the schools, Italy has thus far neglected this one important facet of the humanities. For the musically talented youngster,

Italy does offer excellent instruction in its many conservatories and music lyceums. Unfortunately, the ten-year course is so heavily congested with musical subjects that the student rarely finds time to broaden his education in other fields. Few are able to combine musical and academic courses of study. Composers deplore the fact that only a minutely small percentage of children are given any kind of music instruction. Courses in music appreciation are offered in most secondary schools and colleges in the United States, but no such courses appear in the curriculum of schools. Music History is taught in three universities only.

The wealth of Italian music of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, forgotten for centuries and preserved in libraries, was first made known to the public by German musicologists, notably Johannes Wolf and Freidrich Ludwig. Even today interest in these earlier periods is a field of investigation pursued by only a handful of scholars. Among these are Nino Pirrotta, now professor of Music at Harvard University; Frederico Ghisi, professor of music history at the University of Florence; and Claudio Sartori of Milan.

The result of this sad situation is an uninformed and often hostile audience, and the growth of an ever wider gap between the composer and the listener. The civic task of informing the public on Italian (and foreign) musical life and culture has now fallen almost entirely on the shoulders of the *Rassegna Musicale*, which has been in existence for about 30 years, and the newly founded *Ricordiana*. The venerable *Rivista Musicale Italiana*, a scholarly periodical devoted to essays on music of all periods, is now deceased, after having served its readers for more than a half-century.

On the other hand, a recent poll by a Milanese newspaper endeavoring to discover how much music was made and consumed by Milanese amateurs gives a less pessimistic picture. Three hundred and fifty thousand, or roughly one-fourth of the urban population of Italy's largest city, were approached. To the question, "Do you play an instrument?," students scored the highest with 40%, while the members of the medical profession were lowest with a mere 5%. A second poll showed that the guitar was the preferred instrument with

25%, piano for 20%, accordion for 20%, wind instruments (especially those used in dance bands) for 15%, violin for 10%, and other instruments for the remaining 10%. These statistics show that music as a hobby occupies a rather important part in the life of Italians. Inasmuch as classes in music, either performance or appreciation, were unavailable in school, the amateurs must have learned to play their instruments purely for enjoyment. But how much this prepares them for an appreciation of the new music, which is readily available over the radio on the "Terzo Programma," is questionable.

On the truly bright side of the picture, Italian composers are justifiably proud of The Radio Audifonica Italiana (usually referred to as the RAI), and the music publishing house, especially Suvini and Zerboni, Carisch, and Ricordi, all in Milan. Their aid has been invaluable. In most cases publication usually follows performance, the worth of the composition having been decided on by an impartial committee. Publishing houses receive no subsidy from the government as do the performance organizations. The Casa Editrice Musicale Suvini & Zerboni is, in a sense, a philanthropic agency. I had the opportunity of visiting its headquarters and speaking with its amiable editor-in-chief, Riccardo Malipiero, our conversation took place against a background of rock-and-roll emanating from the adjoining room. He explained that Suvini & Zerboni also published popular music, and that these songs were sung and evaluated for publication by its advisory staff. The enormous sale of such songs makes possible the printing and publication of serious music which might have otherwise remained in manuscript.

The service which the RAI renders to composers in commissioning works, and in performing and recording them with one of the several excellent symphonic and choral organizations, is truly magnificent. The orchestras of Turin, Milan, Florence, Rome, and Naples allow several rehearsals for the performance of a modern composition. The first chair men include such names as oboist Giuseppe Bongera of the Turin orchestra, Franco Gulli, concertmaster of the Milan orchestra, and Antonio Abussi, concertmaster of the

Maggio Musicale Orchestra. Perhaps the greatest living flutist is Severino Gazzelloni, a master musician who performs fiendishly difficult works by Boulez and Maderna with disarming ease. It is no novelty to mention the famous vocalists in opera today, for Italy has been turning out first-rate singers for centuries. While pianists such as Arturo Benedetti Michelangelo and Pietro Scarpini may not possess the glamour of such operatic stars as Renata Tebaldi and Mario Del Monaco, they have won international acclaim. Nor is there need to discuss the iron men of the baton; veterans such as Tullio Serafin, Vittorio Gui, and Franco Caracciolo are internationally known. Among the conductors of the younger generation Bruno Bartoletti, Massimo Scaglia, Mario Rossi, and Bruno Maderna are eagerly sought after by the dedecaphonists and post-Webernians. They are not merely sympathetic to the cause, but are true champions of modern music.

That there is a definite renaissance in instrumental and vocal music today in Italy is evidenced by the enormous amount of serious music composed, the number of concerts of modern music given each year (including radio broadcasts), and the many new works performed at the music festivals at Venice (International Festival of Contemporary Music), the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the Sagra Musicale of Perugia, and the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto. Whether or not the composers will succeed in selling their product to a general audience is something which only posterity can determine. The important thing is that future generations should have a product to evaluate, and, to this end, Italian composers are now offering a fare broad enough to satisfy the taste and to challenge the intellect of every listener.

W. THOMAS MARROCCO

[Professor Marrocco is at present writing a book on contemporary Italian music. Material for this article and for the book has been gathered through a grant by the American Philosophical Society.]

Books

THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF THE "POVERELLO"

That wonderfully inexpensive friend of students, teachers, and the reading public in general, the paperback, has recently brought into its ever-growing fold one of the world's great masterpieces: *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis*. The interested reader will soon be able to choose between two new translations: one by Raphael Brown, which was first printed in August 1958 (Doubleday, Image Series), and one by L. Sherley-Price which will be published in November of this year (Penguin Classics).

Of course *The Little Flowers* had been translated into English before: not only because of the tremendous popularity which the "Poverello" of Assisi has always enjoyed, but also because of the merit of the little work, which has long been one of the best-loved books in Christendom.

Of the "old" translations (I do not know how many editions were made, for instance, of the 1864 — the first? — translation by H. E. Manning, or of the 1887 translation by A. Langdon Alger), especially popular was the one by T. W. Arnold (Dent and Sons), which between 1898 and 1922 went through fourteen reprintings, and the one by Thomas Okey (also published by Dent and Sons), which was reprinted five times between 1910 and 1925. May I say, parenthetically, that in 1925 the work was also put into English verse by James Rhoades.

Like the earlier translations, the one by L. Sherley-Price was made from the Italian translation of the original Latin text. It contains the *Fioretti*—the *Little Flowers* proper (Chapter I combines the first two of most editions, so that the total is 52 instead of the usual 53 chapters)—the *Five Considerations on the Holy Stigmata of Saint Francis* (which are usually included in most editions of *The Little Flowers*), and five appendices: "A Summary of Events in the Life of Saint Francis," "The Testament of Saint Francis," "The Song of Brother Sun," "Saint Francis' Paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer," and "Saint Francis' Blessing Given to Brother Leo." The translation is accurate and simple, and definitely aimed at the modern reader (suffice it to consider the opening lines of Chapter I in Arnold's and in Sherley-Price's translations respectively: 1) "At the first, needs must we consider how the glorious Saint Francis in all the acts of his life was conformed unto Christ the blessed

one;" and 2) First of all, let us consider how the glorious Saint Francis resembled Christ in every action of his life"). Further, the present translation simplifies the usually long titles of each chapter, which, in the original, are often a brief synopsis of what follows.

Raphael Brown's translation, which is also commendable, is of special interest because, while it follows the chapter-structure of the Fioretti, it is based primarily on the original Latin text, the *Actus Beati Francisci et Sociorum Eius—Deeds of the Blessed Francis and of his Companions*— (first published by Paul Sabatier in 1902) which was written, for the most part, by brother Ugolino da Santa Maria in Montegiorgio in the last decades of the 13th century. Brown's translation includes many phrases or even entire paragraphs which were omitted both from the *Fioretti* and from the manuscript of the *Actus* used by the anonymous Italian translator of the late 14th century. (He was a Florentine or Siennese, who probably himself added in the vulgar tongue the *Five Considerations on the Stigmata*). All in all, however, the differences between the two modern translations are such as would be of interest only to the specialist or the curious. Like the Sherley-Price translation, Brown's was also done with the ideal of modernity and directness of style in mind, and not—as the translator makes a point of stating—in an artificial Victorian imitation of medieval English. Brown's edition also contains the *Consideration of the Holy Stigmata*, and further, *The Life of Brother Juniper*, *The Life of Brother Giles by Brother Leo*, and *The Sayings of Brother Giles by Brother Leo*, and *The Sayings of Brother Giles*. It also includes 19 little chapters (from the *Actus*) which have never before appeared in English; the *Canticle of Brother Sun*, some biographical sketches, notes, and a bibliography.

Both editions of *The Little Flowers* are preceded by succinct and up-to-date introductions (Brown's is the fuller), and provide a useful map of the region around Assisi. Both are in every respect superior to any version heretofore available to the English reader.

[C. S.]

THE PILLAR OF CLOUD

"To trace an influence in literature, though an invidious task is a perfectly defensible one, but to try to establish the relation of any abstract mode of thought to the plastic arts is to follow, like Christian, a path between the fiends and the quagmire." Thus, more than twenty years ago, Nesca Robb in her *Neoplatonism in the Italian Renaissance*, and her remark remains thoroughly applicable today. But over the past two decades few developments in humanistic studies have been more notable than the emergence of

a dedicated, able body of investigators who have been examining the historical interrelationships of the various arts and the modes of thought current at the time of their creation, who in dealing with the pictorial and plastic arts often tend to speak of themselves as "iconographers" rather than as "art historians," and who, braving the Dark Valley, have made the path between fiends and quagmire, if not a beaten way, still a broader and better lit path than it was only a generation ago. And now comes an illuminating book by one of the most gifted of the iconographers, Edgar Wind's *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (Yale University Press, 1958).

Professor Wind (first holder of the recently created Chair of the History of Art at Oxford University) sets out to study one stream of Renaissance mysticism arising from the concept of divine mysteries held by the Florentine Humanists and to trace its influence in the art of the High Renaissance. The result is an extraordinarily skillful study in the history of ideas together with a set of fresh and impressive interpretations for a number of major works of art, including Botticelli's *Primavera* and *The Birth of Venus*. Professor Wind helps us to see both the age and the achievements of its more intellectual painters with a tutored eye.

He begins with the ancient mysteries themselves, in which he distinguishes three historical strata. First were what he calls "the ritual mysteries," the actual mass initiations into the company of the blessed, involving the purgation of the fear of death and also a vow of secrecy about the specific rites. The ritual mysteries led in time to what Professor Wind terms "the figurative mysteries" of the philosophers. The great Hellenic thinkers, notably Plato, were in point of fact scornful of the popular mysteries as furnishing cheap promises of salvation to the masses. Nevertheless, the philosophers, including Plato, did adopt some of the metaphors and language of the mystery cults (albeit by times mockingly) when they addressed themselves to the select few who were prepared to cultivate within themselves understanding, wisdom, and virtue. Later still came "the magic mysteries," a phenomenon with which Professor Wind is not here concerned.

The Florentine intellectuals of the Renaissance did not, of course, distinguish among levels of historical development in the Greek mysteries. Instead they found what seemed to them like widespread evidence of a covert body of divine knowledge among the ancients whose hierophants were as much concerned to conceal it as to reveal it. Hence the Florentine thinkers themselves not only adopted certain practices of intentional obscurity in their own writings (as is notorious) but also helped to diffuse what was tantamount to an aesthetic theory encouraging simultaneous revelation and concealment. Utterances intended to convey meanings of the highest ethical or religious import should employ what Pico della Mirandola called "enigmatic veils and poetic dissimulation."

This cult of the cryptic, of concealment accompanying revelation, rested on authority impressive to the Humanists of the Florentine Academy. Plutarch had quoted Heraclitus on the Delphic prophecies of Apollo: "He neither tells nor conceals but gives a sign." The writings ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite (the Athenian disciple of St. Paul) had declared, "The divine ray cannot reach us unless it is covered with poetic veils;" and Ficino, echoing the sentiment, asserted that "behind a veil, divine mysteries are meant to be hidden." Even more vigorously the Pseudo-Dionysius had said, "All those who are wise in divine matters and are interpreters of the mystical revelations prefer incongruous symbols for holy things, so that divine things may not be easily accessible" — or, as Professor Wind appositely quotes from Donne, "For as well the Pillar of *Cloud*, as that of *Fire*, did the office of directing."

What we have here, then, is an intellectual interest akin to, but not precisely identical with the body of medieval allegory. The point of departure was not the multiple "senses" of the Bible but the classical enthusiasms of Ficino, Pico, and the Medicean circle. Predictably the stream of thought thus begun moved toward blending pagan wisdom (especially of the Platonic strain) with Christian truth, an end to which artists as well as philosophers might contribute.

As for the themes created in this intellectual ambiance, Professor Wind begins with one of the most familiar and lovely motifs in Renaissance painting, the Circle of the Graces, in which three naked or diaphanously clothed women, their arms intertwined or their hands interlaced, are seen dancing in a circle. The modern beholder viewing the Circle of the Graces is hardly likely to attach much ethical, let alone religious meaning to this charming motif; but, as Professor Wind shows, it carried a considerable meaning for an instructed Renaissance audience. Alberti, in his *De pictura*, called the attention of artists to the text of Seneca's *Of Benefits*, where the Roman philosopher (who in general was distrustful of allegories, believing that "such ineptitudes should be left to the poets") had explained why the Graces are three in number, why they are sisters, and why they interlace their hands. The reason, said Seneca, is that they represent the three phases of true liberality: giving, receiving, and returning benefits. The central Grace (the chief dignity), he explains, is that of the giver, but the main point is not so much that of precedence as that the circle of liberality must never be interrupted or broken. Seneca's allegorization was picked up and extended in Servius's commentary on the *Æneid*, which tells us that in the Circle of the Graces one has her back to us and the other two face us "because for one benefit issuing from us two are supposed to return." Boccaccio and other Renaissance mythographers added still further allegorical

embellishments. Thus what we today might construe as typical evidence for the paganization of the arts was that and something more, for this characteristic classical motif was intended to suggest to the instructed beholder a meaning of substantial ethical import.

But the Dance of the Graces, Professor Wind goes on to show, was used also to evoke a pattern of thought more exalted even than that of a noble prudential ethics, thoughts indeed that centered on "the divine mysteries." A mystical interpretation came into being when the Florentine Humanists and artists superimposed a Platonic reading on Seneca's Graces. The medal of Pico della Mirandola bore on its reverse the dancing Graces, who here, however, are labelled Beauty, Love, Pleasure (*Pulchritudo, Amor, Voluptas*); and with this new pattern of allegorization we move into the realm of speculative thought which the Florentine Platonists variously termed "Orphic theology," "Platonic theology," or simply "poetic theology," or simply "poetic theology." Fundamental to this theology was a triadic concept that saw all things governed by threes. "I surmise," wrote Ficino in *De amore*, "that God governs all things by threes." And the Neoplatonists saw triads everywhere from the tripod of Apollo, the triple-headed Cerberus, the three Fates, and the three goddesses in the Judgment of Paris to Virgil's remark that "the god rejoices in the uneven number" (*numero deus impare gaudet*) and thence to St. Augustine's declaration that the threefold aspects of Charity are like the footstep of the Trinity (*Tria in Charitate, velut vestigium Trinitatis*).

Equally important in this theology was the concept of "the whole in the part" or the principle that each discernible triad mirrors and indeed contains every other existing triad as an organizing principle of the universe, and that each of this infinite series of triads is merely "an unfolding" of the transcendent unity, the Creator, from whom each has emerged. Beyond this system of unfolding triads was a concept of how God sustained, by the divine will, a continuous relationship to man and the total order of being. This relationship in itself was conceived as a kind of triad, which Professor Wind, freely translating Ficino, terms that of "Procession, conversion of rapture, and reversal," corresponding to the Senecan Circle of Grace — giving, accepting, and returning. The divine spirit in its procession or overflowing (*emanatio*) produces a vivifying rapture or conversion (*raptio, conversio, vivificatio*) in its beneficiares, for whose souls, thus, is made possible a return (*remeatio*) to heaven, rejoining the transcendent One.

Granting that the Florentine Humanists were inclined to see in the Circle of the Graces something more than the Stoic moralists had seen, we may still seek the precise meaning of the dancing

Graces on Pico's medal with its triad of Beauty, Love, and Pleasure. The answer, Professor Wind says, it to be found in Ficino's *De amore*, which identifies this very triad with the divine pattern of procession, conversion, and return. Says Ficino, "Love starts from Beauty and ends in Pleasure." The first two terms, of course, echo Plato's statement in the *Symposium*, "Love is desire aroused by Beauty." But the term Pleasure (*Voluptas*), which seems to offer severe difficulties, really furnishes the key to the meaning of this Circle of Graces when we realize that the Neoplatonists were speaking of divine (rather than profane) Love and that *Voluptas* meant to them not simple Pleasure but sacred Joy. Ficino and Pico, however, had divergent ideas as to the nature of sacred Joy, and Professor Wind suggests that the well-known break between the two men may have stemmed from their disagreement on this issue. Although both men agreed that the highest form of Love is blind, for Ficino it was the blindness of joy, whereas for Pico it was a mystical self-annihilation. For Ficino the supreme felicity was to *find* oneself in God by the fullest uncovering of the traces of God in oneself: thus Ficino saw the ultimate human pleasure as a form of self-knowledge. But to Pico this concept of Pleasure verged on narcissism, and he urged instead the supreme felicity of *losing* oneself in God, a state of mystical unknowing in which the consciousness of self is lost and a more rapturous form of mystical experience than Ficino could accept. But whatever their disagreements, both men saw in the Circle of the Graces "a divine mystery," which, if explicitly stated, would declare that Love, starting from Beauty, can end for the instructed soul in a union with God. The medal of Giovanna Tornabuoni, on which the Graces are specified as Chastity, Beauty, and Love, pointed to a mystery no less "divine." The Dance of the Graces signified for the Florentine Neoplatonists, then, not simply a Stoic pattern of prudential ethics, however noble, but also an area of profound religious experience.

Another of the Humanists' "divine mysteries" concerned the reconciliation of opposites or conflicting dualities. What mysteries, for example, lay behind the mythical union of Venus and Mars or such embodiments of Love as the armed Venus or, again, the Diana-Venus of Virgil's *Aeneid*? Or what divine mystery is embodied in such eternal problems as Reason versus the Passions, of Virtue versus mundane Pleasure, of the Active and Contemplative lives? The Neoplatonists' answer was not at all novel, "*Harmonia est discordia concors*," which is only one way of saying that each of these warring dualities begets its own triad because the opposite require some mediating term, some third note, before harmony can be brought out of discord. Again, what is important here is not altogether what these Humanists thought but also their way of thinking, and their way was to press toward some "divine mystery"

behind the veil, seeking often with the Pseudo-Dionysius "incongruous symbols for holy things."

Having thus established the intellectual background, but with a richness of scholarship that no review can suggest, Professor Wind then turns to a series of notable works, starting with the *Primavera*, done under the influence of Renaissance Neoplatonism. The *Primavera* Professor Wind sees as a painting whose programme was derived from the Neoplatonic philosophy of love and whose structure was suggested by the dialectic of the *Theologia Platonica*. In the triad on the right, Zephyr, gliding swiftly from above into the garden of Venus, clasps the nymph Chloris, who is transformed by an ovidian metamorphosis into the vernal figure of Flora. This is the triad of "procession," Love in the guise of the ardent Zephyr entering the world from above. He seizes the frightened nymph Chloris, and from this union of conflicting yet conjoined dualities (the *discordia concors* of ardent Love and fleeing Chastity) emerges Beauty in the haunting figure of Flora. Beside this tumultuous triad and in the center of the painting stands the serene figure of Venus, Madonna-like in her dignity and restraint, her right hand lifted in a gesture of control and benediction; but above this chaste figure of the goddess a blindfolded Cupid aims his flame-tipped arrow. Venus and Cupid as here painted suggest a conjunction of opposites (Love as a benign controlling force and Love as an aggressive, passionate spirit), a paradox resolved in Ficino's statement: "If the soul is the mother of Love, then Venus is identical with the soul, and Amor is the soul's energy." Venus in pose and gesture and the blind Cupid aiming his fiery arrow direct the beholder to the second triad in the painting. This, the triad of "conversion" or vivifying rapture, gives us with marvellous symmetry and rhythm the divine Dance of the Graces. The Graces here Professor Wind identifies as Chastity, Beauty, Pleasure. Their dance, in its beautiful harmony and balance, suggests "a divine mystery" in which Chastity (the central figure with her back to the beholder) moves from Beauty on her right toward sacred Joy, her glance being directed beyond her sister toward Mercury who stands, detached and poised, brushing the clouds with his caduceus. By the traditions of Renaissance mythography Mercury was not only, as Professor Wind says, "the shrewdest and swiftest of the gods, the god of eloquence, the skimmer of clouds, the psychopompos, the leader of the Graces, the mediator between mortals and gods bridging the distance between earth and heaven:—to humanists Mercury was above all the 'ingenious' god of the probing intellect, sacred to grammarians and metaphysicians, the patron of lettered inquiry and interpretation to which he lent his very name, the revealer of secret or 'Hermetic' knowledge, of which his magical staff became a symbol. In a word, Hermes was the divine mystagogue." Seen in this light, Mercury in the painting is the Platonic hierophant

touching the clouds that veil the Divine as well as the figure toward whom the central Grace is impelled in the movement of the dance. But this is not all. In Professor Wind's words:

If Platonic Love were understood only in the narrow, popular sense in which it means a complete disengagement from earthly passions, the solitary figure of Mercury would be the only Platonic lover in the picture. But Ficino knew his Plato too well not to realize that, after gazing into the Beyond, the lover was supposed to return to this world and move it by the strength of his clarified passion. The composition of the painting is therefore not fully understood, nor the role of Mercury quite comprehended, until he and Zephyr are seen as symmetrical figures. To turn away from the world with the detachment of Mercury, to re-enter the world with the impetuosity of Zephyr, these are the two complementary forces of love, of which Venus is the guardian and Cupid the agent . . . Between these two extremes unfold the triadic movements characteristic of the *Theologia Platonica*. Not only do the groups 'driven' by Zephyr and 'guided' by Mercury exhibit mutations of the triadic pattern, but the entire picture seems to spell out the three phases of the Neoplatonic dialectic: *emanatio-conversio-remeatio*; that is, 'procession' in the descent from Zephyr to Flora, 'conversion' in the dance of the Graces, and 'reascend' in the figure of Mercury . . . Since an orientation toward the Beyond, from which all things flow and to which they all return, is a primary tenet of this philosophy, the composition and mood of the painting are pervaded by a sense of that invisible world toward which Mercury turns and from which Zephyr enters.

Professor Wind thus offers what may be called the first complete and satisfying interpretation of the *Primavera*. He has brought to bear not only the literary background long ascribed to the painting but also, systematically and fully, the "poetic theology" zealously cultivated in the Medicean circle of which Botticelli (*persona sofistica*, so Vasari called him) was a part.

Had Professor Wind stopped here, his achievement would have been remarkable enough, but he goes beyond the *Primavera* to illuminate many other works that seem to owe much to the cult of the mysteries: *The Birth of Venus*, which, in detail as well as its triadic design, voices the same philosophy of love as does the *Primavera*; Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (Uffizi) and his *Sacred and Profane Love* (Borghese), which Professor Wind would retitle *Amore celeste e umano* and which displays the divine triad

of Beauty-Love-Pleasure, the unadorned nude here as elsewhere representing Celestial Love; Michelangelo's various *Ledas* and his figure of *Night* (Medici Chapel) involving the symbolism of Amor as a god of death; Raphael's *Apollo and Marsyas* (Stanza della Segnatura), wherein the flaying of Marsyas facing the god is construed as "itself a Dionysian rite, a tragic ordeal of purification by which the ugliness of the outward man was thrown off and in which the beauty of his inward self revealed," with the agonized cry that Ovid ascribed to the sufferer, "Why do you tear me from myself"—and further the notable Mars and Venus paintings of Botticelli, Piero di Cosimo, and Paolo Veronese; and Michelangelo's statue of *Bacchus* (Bargello), which Professor Wind sees as more than a classical "forgery," indeed as a "mystery" of the Bacchic rite.

Professor Wind does not leave his subject without considering some of the problems implicit in an art designed for concealment as well as revelation. The problem, he reminds us, was raised in the Renaissance itself by Aretino's attack on Michelangelo for learned obscurantism. Aretino was prepared to credit Michelangelo with "allegorical senses of great profundity which are understood only by a few," but for him this very fact posed an anomaly. If a work of art employs symbols whose full meaning is available only to initiates, then it cannot be genuinely instructive: it reveals its meanings only to those who already know, and it deliberately conceals its meanings from the uninformed who are those most assuredly in need of instruction. Professor Wind grants a certain cogency to this argument, but points out that it is rather too neat in assuming mutually exclusive audiences: it ignores the many on middle ground between omniscience and ignorance who may, as it were, be teased into the pursuit of wisdom by a philosophy, a poetry, or an art that makes use of crypticism by design. But whether the theory itself was wise or unwise, it was most certainly widespread in an age that cultivated enigmas and rejoiced in *icones symbolicae*, and Professor Wind has done great service in bringing this aspect of Renaissance thought into the light of day.

In final judgment of this book I can offer only an almost embarrassing high appraisal. A first reading produced enthusiasm; a second and third reading have, if possible, increased my esteem for the book, which, by the way, is handsome and fully illustrated. One may ask of a novel or a play that it create a distinct world of its own. It is seldom that a work of exposition can do so. But so great is the range of Professor Wind's learning, so skillful his power of manipulating ideas, so lucid and evocative is his own style that a world of intellectual experience out of the Renaissance is not merely explained but re-created for the reader. *The Pagan Mysteries* is an impressive and memorable book.

[HUGH G. DICK]

THE RENAISSANCE STAGE

Italians set the shape of the modern theater, and they were its first scenic designers. The playhouse we know, with its canvas scenery and its miraculous machines was actually born during the Italian Renaissance when men thought they were rediscovering and reconstructing the great theater of the ancient world.

Almost the only key that the Renaissance had to the classic theater was Vitruvius' *De Architectura* which dominated theatrical theory for nearly three centuries. Although the Roman architect of Caesar's times did not supply too much useful information, his account of the *periaktoi*, or revolving prisms, his observations about perspective in the theater, and his description of the three kinds of classic settings, were enough to set the Italian artists to painting scenery. Some as absorbed as Paolo Uccello in thinking, "Oh, what a delightful thing is this perspective!" became scenic specialists.

In 1545, Sebastiano Serlio, an architect as well as a painter, brought together in Book II of his *Architettura* what he believed was the nature of the classic theater, as sifted through Vitruvius, and what he knew were the stage practices of his contemporaries. He was the first to publish drawings of the three types of classic scenery: the tragic set with its lofty palaces, the comic set with its ordinary city houses, and the set for the satyr play with its landscape of trees, hills, and cottages. Far more important, he described how he — and, we may presume, the other designers — built and painted scenery.

It seems like a dream come true that one can now find this first published account of modern theater practice as well as the two subsequent ones, by Nicola Sabbattini and Joseph Furtenbach respectively, combined in one volume — and in more than adequate English translations. (*The Renaissance Stage: Documents of Serlio, Sabbattini and Furtenbach*. Translated by Allardice Nicoll, John H. McDowell, George R. Kernodle. Edited by Barnard Hewitt. Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1958.)

While the eminent British theater historian Allardice Nicoll, himself, is responsible for both the clean text and brilliant documentation of the Serlio piece, two of his former graduate students, now occupying chairs in American Universities, translated and expertly edited Sabbattini's and the elder Furtenbach's stage manuals, as one may call the deft, practical essays. John H. McDowell brings a lifetime of studies to the task, and every footnote reveals his thorough knowledge of the stage practices in the late sixteenth — and early seventeenth — century Italian theatre as described in Sabbattini's book of 1638, *Pratica di fabricar scene e machine ne' teatri*. It is Sabbattini's lucid explanation of the various ways of making quick scene changes — many of which still used by our

contemporary stage designers — that makes his treatise particularly pertinent reading.

No one, of course, could have been better prepared for his special assignment than Professor George Kernodle. Having worked from primary sources in his own, basic book on Renaissance stage design, *From Art to Theatre*, he appreciates the value of the German Furtenbach's travelogue describing vividly the spectacles and shows he saw on his Italian journey. The loving care for the author and his writings, foremost among them *Architectura Civilis* (1628) and *Architectura Recreationis* (1640), noticeable in Kernodle's introductory remarks, has made the translations, the captions of the excellently reproduced illustrations, and the learned notes a special treat.

The three theatrical sources, the importance of which for the modern historian cannot be over-estimated, are preceded by an admirably concise and scholarly general introduction in which Barnard Hewitt, praiseworthy for a superb editing job of the whole, traces the various elements that made the Renaissance playhouse the cradle of the modern theater.

Altogether, the American Education Theatre Association, with the inestimable help of the University of Miami Press, has gifted students of the theater arts with a truly great book, another tribute, incidentally, to the genius of Italy.

[WILLIAM W. MELNITZ]

A STUDY IN TOTALITARIAN RULE

A rather rewarding excursion into political Italy of the Fascist period is furnished by Dr. Dante L. Germino, a young political scientist who teaches at Wellesley College. *The Italian Fascist Party in Power* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1959) is concerned with the functioning of the Fascist party from 1925 until the beginning of World War II. Dr. Germino spent the academic year 1954-55 in Italy as a Fulbright grantee, and his book is based on sources that have not been fully used by foreign students of Italian Fascism. He has relied on party "orders of the day," provincial and local party publications, memoirs by Fascists, and interviews with scholars and former Fascist officials. Much valuable material of a documentary nature was unavailable to Germino and will apparently continue to be locked in the *Archivio di Stato*. Perhaps this blackout was a blessing for we are spared from ploughing through minutia on a defunct political institution. Instead, Germino found enough data to write generally and interestingly on a limited subject. For the uninitiated this is an excellent little volume from which to learn of Fascism through the focus

on party apparatus. Those who already know of Fascism, at first-hand or through study, will receive new insights into the subject as a result of this concentration on the workings of the Fascist party.

Some readers will be surprised that Mussolini's name appears infrequently in the book. Unlike Stalin, but like Hitler, Il Duce rarely occupied himself with party affairs. From the party point of view it was the secretary who held the key position. Hence we learn more about men who held that office: Roberto Farinacci, Augusto Turati, Giovanni Giuriati, and Achille Starace. It was these secretaries who guided the development of the party into a completely totalitarian institution, one that was not consciously planned for but which gradually evolved in response to the imperatives of totalitarian rule. Membership soared from 700,000 in 1925 to 3.6 million in 1940 as Italians joined the party in the five open periods set aside for new members. Despite its growth the Fascist party was a disciplined one because always a hard inner core of militants kept matters under firm control, and that is the reason why the Fascists never had to perfect a system of periodic purges to keep the bloodstream pure.

One of Germino's chapters is devoted to Fascist emphasis on training the youth of the nation. He agrees with A. C. Jemolo that the Church suffered defeat in its 1931 agreement with the Fascists over control of education. Another chapter, "Three Uneasy Allies," discusses Fascist relations with the armed forces and the police. These latter were needed as auxiliaries only, since the party developed its own militia and political police which buttressed the regime. A revealing chapter on internecine struggles is instructive in the ways of dictatorship; it illustrates that beneath the outward appearance of harmony, even a totalitarian society has its parts in constant friction.

In his final chapter, Germino attempts to answer the question, Was Fascist Italy totalitarian? Of course there has been disagreement on the answer, and Germino reminds us that Mussolini's regime has not been given that title by several non-Italian scholars as well as many Italians themselves. But the author asserts that the Fascist dictatorship developed relentlessly toward the totalitarian pattern during its twenty years in power. The Fascist system was totalitarian because it had a single powerful political party, an official ideology, effective control over the means of mass communication, and a terroristic police apparatus. Only the last factor found Italy falling short by Nazi and Soviet standards. History, then, must rank Mussolini alongside of Stalin and Hitler, not with dictators like Franco, Salazar, or Peron. Such conclusions are argued strongly by Dr. Germino in this well written volume.

[DAVID G. FARRELLY]

LIFE OF A MAN

Giuseppe Ungaretti has already appeared in English translations in several magazines and in a few anthologies of Italian poetry, (*The Penguin Book of Italian Verse*; *The Promised Land and Other Poems* edited by S. Pacifici). Mr. Mandelbaum's presentation in English verse of Ungaretti's *Life of a Man* (New Directions: New York, 1959) however, is the first attempt to present this poet to the English speaking public on an extensive basis. The translations include selections from Ungaretti's major works: *L'allegria*, *Sentimento del tempo*, *Il dolore*, and *La terra promessa*, as they have been collected in the volume published by Mondadori under the title of *Vita d'un uomo*.

To speak of Italian poetry of this century is to speak inevitably and at length of Ungaretti and his poetry. It is with him that the turning point of contemporary Italian poetry is reached and a new vigor and a new life begin. As Mr. Mandelbaum aptly puts it in his brief but excellent presentation of Ungaretti which precedes the translations: "Ungaretti is the first to face unequivocally the problematic, terrible task of every modern Italian poet, the task that takes its toll in silence: to resurrect or to bury the cadaver of literary Italian. Ungaretti resurrected." But this resurrection was also a revolution because it brought in its wake the elimination of all the verbiage, syntactical embroidery, and exotic techniques that had weighed down a good part of Italian poetry since Leopardi.

For Ungaretti poetical expression is primarily the restoration of the "word" to its true meaning, to its original force. For this reason Mr. Mandelbaum's task as a translator was particularly difficult and demanding. In the opinion of this reader he has acquitted himself very well indeed, and if one is tempted to observe that in many places the translation is too literal, further reflection will show that it would have been impossible to do otherwise and still retain the rich allusiveness of Ungaretti's words. Mr. Mandelbaum has immersed himself well into the world of Ungaretti, a world of intense introspection, of deep anguish and primarily of "piety." This is obvious not only in the accurate rendering of the individual poems but in the selection of these same poems.

In the presentation of Ungaretti Mr. Mandelbaum refers to Eugenio Montale and Salvatore Quasimodo and announces that he is now at work on translations from these two poets. We are looking forward to the appearance of these two other works which will then make if finally possible for the English reader to become acquainted with the three most significant poets of contemporary Italy on a comprehensive scale.

[C.L.G.]

Items

TRAFFIC LAWS in Italy became considerably more stringent on July 1, 1959. A new code put into effect on that date provides severe punishment for those who disregard its provisions and persist in regarding themselves as members of a racing team. The law was prompted by the fabulous increase in motor vehicles and by the staggering number of fatal traffic accidents. Today there are nearly 6,000,000 vehicles on the roads of Italy, compared to 1,300,000 in 1950, and it is estimated that twenty-five persons are killed on the Italian roads everyday.

CESARE PAVESE'S unfinished and unpublished novel *Fuoco grande* was published by Einaudi of Turin in the *Coralli* series. The novel, interrupted after the eleventh chapter, deals with the south of Italy and presents a rather gloomy atmosphere of family intrigues. The book was co-authored by a woman, Bianca Garuffi, each author writing one chapter alternatively and in the first person.

THE SICILIAN elections of last June did not have the drastic results that had been predicted in some quarters. The Christian Democrats successfully defended their position as

the strongest group in the island's Parliament, while the Communists' gains were only slight. The struggle between the Christian Democratic organization and the "rebel" Silvio Milazzo remained still unsolved.

VINCENZO CARDARELLI died on June 13 at the age of 72. He was one of the more significant Italian poets of this century and as editor of *La Ronda* in the period immediately following the first world war he played an important role in Italian letters. For the last several years Cardarelli had been editor of the weekly literary review *La fiera letteraria*.

THE 20TH VENICE Film Festival which had anything but promising beginnings, suddenly came to life with the showing of *Il generale Della Rovere*, the latest film directed by Roberto Rossellini. Apparently Rossellini has been able to recapture in this film some of the inspiration which rendered his early films world-famous. The film, based on a short story by Indro Montanelli, has Vittorio De Sica in the leading role. It seems also that Rossellini, De Sica and Federico Fellini, are preparing a "manifesto" of the Italian cinema which is to be made public

in the form of an open letter addressed to Umberto Tupini recently appointed as head of the new Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment. The Italian film industry hopes that his nomination and the establishment of the new ministry will mean better times for the Italian movie-makers.

OVER 15,000,000 tourists visited Italy in 1958 according to a report published by the Bank of Italy. This represents an increase of 4.5% over the 1957 number. Of these, 979,000 came from the United States (a considerable increase over the previous year) and they were largely responsible for the 29% increase in currency receipts which in 1958 reached \$491,000,000.

THE "STREGA" PRIZE was awarded to Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa for his *Il gattopardo* (See I.Q., no. 9, Books). This book has already achieved a tremendous success not only among critics but also among the reading public. The number of copies sold, close to 100,000, is quite a record for Italy and has prompted the belief that reading habits in the country may be changing.

DIEGO FABBRI'S dramatic works are to be published by Vallecchi of Florence. The first volume containing four of Fabbri's plays, *Orbite* (Orbit), *Palude* (Swamp), *La libreria del sole* (The Bookstore of the Sun) and *Il prato* (The Meadow) has already appeared. The

others are to follow shortly. Fabbri is undoubtedly the most original of living Italian playwrights, and one of the few dramatists anywhere who has succeeded in giving his Christian convictions a true perspective and a meaningful expression in terms of modern life. Regrettably Fabbri does not enjoy in the United States the reputation he has in Europe, in fact, his work is hardly known here.

DINO BUZZATI, the author of *Il deserto dei Tartari* (*The Tarter Steppe* Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952), one of the most widely read and more significant novels of the last twenty years, has just completed a new novel *Il grande ritratto* (*The New Portrait*) to be published soon.

Among recent books having a bearing on Italian culture are the following: *Among Women Only* by Cesare Pavese (The Noonday Press: New York); *Italian Hours* by Henry James (Reprint; Grove Press: New York); *The Life of Girolamo Savonarola* by Roberto Ridolfi (Knopf: New York); *The First Professional Revolutionist: Filippo Michele Buonarroti* (1761-1837). A biographical essay by Elizabeth Eisenstein (Harvard University Press: Cambridge); *Italy, A Modern History* by Mack Smith (University of Michigan Press: Ann Harbor); *The Crime of Giovanni Venturi* by Howard Shaw (Holt and Co.: New York).

ITALY SINCE THE WAR

*The Spring 1960 Number
of the Italian Quarterly
will be devoted to
a survey of Italy since the
end of the last war.*

